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Self-Referential Play Gone Wild: A Case for the "Roman Bourgeois" as Metafiction.

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Self-referential play gone wild: A case for the “Roman bourgeois” as metafiction

Guenin-Lelle, Dianne Paula, Ph.D.

The Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical Col., 1988

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Self-Referential Play Gone Wild:
A Case for the Roman bourgeois as Metafiction

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of French and Italian

by
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Abstract

The Roman bourgeois is a text which has resisted traditional modes of criticism, and thus it has confounded critics who simply did not know what to make of this hybrid work. It has been generally considered to be a novel which lacks coherence and literary merit, and spells the end of the cycle of seventeenth-century comic novels.

This study proposes that the Roman bourgeois be considered as a metafictional text, where textual "anomalies" could be considered as "positive" attributes since they draw attention to the fictional framework and the fiction-making process of the novel.

The novel operates according to the guiding principle that language is an imperfect conduit for representing "reality." Subversion, which runs rampant in the text, is one of the most important strategies which emphasize the problematics of representation. This is effectuated, for example, through intertextual references, as well as the multiple identities of the narrator. The following topics are analyzed in light of this problematic: The novel's prefaces, which problematize the notions of beginnings and authorship; the narrator, who presents himself as the central force of both organization and disorganization; the narratee, who functions as a device of the narrator; the

bourgeoisie, whose identity and function mirror its nature as fictional construct; and the female characters, who act as authors of their own life stories. The arbitrariness of social and legal codes in the novel function as a mise en abyme of the arbitrariness of literary and linguistic codes.

Through its overt manipulation and commentary on literary conventions in the Roman bourgeois, the mechanics of creating fiction are laid bare, not masked by the illusion that they represent anything other than fiction itself.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Since its publication in 1666, the Roman bourgeois has often confounded critics who simply do not know what to make of this hybrid work. The novel has never been very popular and was actually out of print from 1714 to the middle of the nineteenth century. According to Antoine Adam, the work would have been forgotten if Furetière had not been a friend of Racine and Boileau, as well as the author of the famous Dictionnaire universel. Adam states: "L'oeuvre ne s'impose pas par sa valeur. Elle n'a même pas le mérite d'être le témoin d'une époque et d'un moment dans l'histoire de notre littérature."¹ Jean Serroy in his Roman et réalité, refers to the text as the "tombeau des romans," marking the end of the comic novel of this period, since he sees it as a work written totally "in negation."² Thus Serroy defines the Roman bourgeois by what it is not -- it is not like any other novel of the period. He therefore deems it just to criticize the author for not following the literary conventions of the time. In the Evolution of the French Novel, English Showalter remarks that the work disintegrates at the end, that Furetière only presents a negative "anti-novel" since, according to Showalter, the author did not construct the work in a positive way.³ Adam, Serroy and

Showalter appear to value a quality which the Roman bourgeois does not incorporate, that a novel should be vraisemblable and firmly rooted in the "real" world with true-to-life characters in an historically plausible context.

The seventeenth century perhaps more than some others values vraisemblance. René Bray in his Formation de la doctrine classique en France refers to it as the rule ". . . la plus générale, la plus importante."⁴ He defines vraisemblance as ". . . la règle essentielle de notre doctrine. Dictée par la raison, fondée sur la fin morale assignée à la poésie, elle contient l'interprétation véritable du naturalisme classique."⁵ He states that vraisemblance does not depend on scientific possibility or history, but instead on generally accepted public opinion. This echoes Boileau who proclaims:

Jamais au spectateur n'offrez rien d'incroyable,
Le vrai peut quelquefois n'être pas vraisemblable.⁶

The cycle of the comic novel was born as a reaction against the invraisemblance of the pastoral novels such as L'Astrée, and the heroic novels such as Cassandre, Le Grand Cyrus and Clélie. This is of course ironic in light of the criticism by Adam, Showalter, and Serroy that the Roman bourgeois is itself invraisemblable. Since the cycle of

comic novels is interpreted to be a reaction against the excesses of the traditional novel, these novels are sometimes referred to as "anti-novels"⁷. The novels, which include L'Histoire comique de Francion by Charles Sorel, Le Roman comique by Paul Scarron, as well as the Roman bourgeois criticize the pastoral and heroic novels for their erroneous and inaccurate historical settings, characters, and action⁸. In the same vein they also criticize their predecessors for having all characters, be they Greek, Roman or Persian, possess French manners and morals as well.⁹

The comic novels make use of satire in their opposition to the traditional novels. According to Adam: "Ce que leurs auteurs ont voulu y mettre c'est bien plutôt la satire du romanesque, de ses thèmes traditionnels, de ses situations, de ses procédés."¹⁰ In this way the comic novels do not pretend to use heroic characters and settings, and prefer to represent the lower classes in less socially acceptable situations.¹¹ Adam remarks that these novels are characterized by ". . .le refus des procédés du roman heroïque, la préférence donnée aux aventures ridicules ou choquantes, aux personnages médiocres ou bas."¹² The Roman bourgeois, it has been argued, goes one step further than either Francion or Le Roman comique since it does not only

satirize the traditional pastoral and heroic novels but goes further and satirizes the comic novel itself.¹³

The Roman bourgeois also differs from other novels of the period in its organization. Critics who analyze this novel must deal with the problem which Michèle Vialet refers to as incohérence: "Il leur paraît impossible d'en saisir la 'cohérence', c'est-à-dire le principe d'organisation, tant formelle que logico-sémantique, selon la complémentarité que traduit bien la vieille expression 'sans rime ni raison'."¹⁴ The novel resists traditional modes of classification, due in part to its fragmented plot and the narrator who contradicts himself throughout.¹⁵ As this study will attempt to demonstrate, these elements, as well as others, problematize vraisemblance and mimetic representation in the novel. The Roman bourgeois does not at first appear to be organized in a "logical" manner, and for that reason it is not necessarily a "readerly" text, to use Barthes's term.¹⁶ From the preface the reader is warned by the author himself against reading this novel as he would read others: "Je sais que le premier soin que tu auras en lisant ce roman, ce sera d'en chercher la clef; mais elle ne te servira de rien, car la serrure est mêlée."¹⁷ The novel explicitly states that it is different from other works; the text therefore self-consciously renders traditional modes of reading problematic.

What I would like to propose in this study is that the textual "anomalies," those devices and strategies in the Roman bourgeois which have generally received negative criticism, be instead considered as "positive" attributes; positive because, arguably, they focus on and expose the fictional framework as well as the fiction-making process of the work itself. One could use a modern approach to criticism where the Roman bourgeois would possibly be considered as a "reflexive" novel or "metafictional" work. Previous works on metafiction have analyzed such works as Don Quixote, Tristram Shandy, Jacques le fataliste, Les Faux-Monnayeurs, and The French Lieutenant's Woman. However they have not addressed the problem of metafiction in French seventeenth-century literature in general, and the Roman bourgeois in particular. Micheal Boyd in his The Reflexive Novel explains this concept:

Recognizing that the relationship between reality and its representation in fictional discourse is problematic, the reflexive novel seeks to examine the act of writing itself, to turn away from the project of representing an imaginary world and to turn inward to examine its own mechanisms. Although the strategies for negotiating this inward turn will vary from novel to novel, all novels written in the reflexive mode seem to use similar techniques of alienation to disrupt their readers' willing suspension of disbelief. These readers soon learn that the story told counts for less than the telling; that language, which would attempt to efface itself in the traditional realistic novel, can have the power to overshadow what it purports to denote; and finally, that

authors can become the major characters in the stories they tell and their writing the central action.¹⁸

Therefore in a metafictional work, the fiction-making process itself is made visible. The result of this process, as Linda Hutcheon states in her Narcissistic Narrative, is that "the reader lives in a world which he is forced to acknowledge as fictional."¹⁹ Far from devalorizing the novel, metafiction draws the reader's attention to what has always been the case: that the world of fiction is essentially different from three-dimensional reality. To cite Hutcheon, "As many metafictionalists have assured their readers, fictional creations are as real, as valid, as 'truthful,' as the empirical objects of our physical world."²⁰

This study will examine how various elements and strategies in the Roman bourgeois underscore the text's nature as a fictional construct. Areas of primary concern will be the novel's prefaces, the narrator, the narratee, and the identity and function of the bourgeoisie as well as that of female characters in the text.

Chapter 2

Prelude to Beginning: Prefaces in the Roman bourgeois

A perennial feature of a novel is its preface. Recently, however, the nature and function of the preface has been a topic of discussion.²¹ One of the major concerns about the preface is its dual nature in that it both precedes and completes the work. The preface precedes the work, as it should be read before the primary text, and completes the work as, more often than not, it is written after the primary text, in which case it serves as a postface.²² It is in relation to the reader, however that the ambivalent function of the preface presents a problem. The reader's interaction with text usually begins with reading the preface, yet the preface's dual role of preface/postface could be considered as a beginning deferred. How does the preface itself address this problem of "beginning" the book? In other words, how does a preface anticipate and respond to a text which does not exist from the perspective of the reader? The dilemma of the preface can be related to the first line of Derrida's "Hors livre": "Ceci (donc) n'aura pas été un livre"²³, where Derrida plays upon this ambivalence.

The preface, by daring to repeat the book and reconstitute it in another register, merely enacts

what is already the case: the book's repetitions are always other than the book. There is, in fact, no "book" other than these ever-different repetitions: the "book" in other words, is always already a "text", constituted by the play of identity and difference. A written preface provisionally localizes the place where between reading and reading, book and book, the inter-inscribing of "reader(s)," "writer(s)," and language is forever at work.²⁴

Each act of reading becomes then a preface to the next reading.

The title of the preface, "Avertissement du libraire au lecteur" plainly states it is the libraire who speaks to the reader. Therefore, there is a deferral of the voice of the author since it is not he who speaks, but the "libraire:"

Tu diras peut-être que je ne parle point en libraire, mais en auteur; aussi la vérité est-elle que tout ce que je t'ai dit a été tiré d'une longue préface que l'auteur même avait mise au-devant du livre. Mais le malheur a voulu qu'ayant été fait il y a longtemps par un homme qui s'est diverti à le composer en sa plus grande jeunesse, il lui est arrivé tous les accidents à quoi les premiers feuillets d'une vieille copie sont sujets. Et comme maintenant ses occupations sont plus sérieuses, cet ouvrage n'aurait jamais vu le jour si l'infidélité de quelques-uns à qui il l'avait confié ne l'avait fait tomber entre mes mains.(p.25)

The voice of authority is not absent but instead is incorporated in the voice of the "libraire" who is both a reader of the text as well as a co-writer of the preface. Therefore the "je" of the preface becomes a blend of the

primary author of the "original" manuscript as well as of the "libraire." The "I," that is to say the subject, is then fragmented and functioning as a "we." Traditionally, when another character or voice speaks in the preface, it is to add an element of "Realism" to the novel, stating for example, that the text is a diary or a retrieved manuscript, thus bracketing the work within the dimension of "Reality."²⁵ However, in this preface, we have something different because this preface claims to be a rewritten version of another preceding one. The "libraire" is reinscribed as the figure of an author who functions in an interplay of absence and presence because the words written have come to him from another; having their origin elsewhere the words are speaking through him.

The preface opens as follows:

Ami lecteur, quoique tu n'achètes et ne lises ce livre que pour ton plaisir, si néanmoins tu n'y trouvais autre chose, tu devrais avoir regret à ton temps et à ton argent. Aussi je te puis assurer qu'il n'a pas été fait seulement pour divertir, mais que son premier dessein a été d'instruire.(p.23) (emphasis mine)

Narrative authority is claimed by the author(s) since the desired effect of the novel seems to be at the outset a didactic one, as the opening of the preface shows. In the context of seventeenth-century "doctrine," this aim was widely accepted:

L'instruction morale assignée comme but à la poésie, la foi dans l'art et dans la règle, le culte de la raison, les dogmes de l'imitation de la nature et de l'imitation des Anciens, voilà le credo de l'esthétique classique, les fondements de toute la doctrine.(emphasis mine)²⁶

The voice authority in the narrative therefore is claimed by the author(s), since it is their text which is going to instruct. This follows Horace's dictum of the function of art, which was to teach and delight through the representation of "Reality," which in this case is through literature. The power of textual discourse over that of "real life events" stems from the power of representation of the "Real" which is free from temporal and spatial confines, therefore allowing the reader to assimilate "fictional" events. Free because art represents essences and structures of the "Real." In Aristotelian thought, "Real" is the world of essences and art is an ordering of the "Existent" into the "True;" art therefore represents the "Real Reality" behind the chaos of the "Existent." A function of art as "Fiction" is to bring out the "True," to put coherence in incoherence, and ultimately to teach and delight.²⁷ Even twentieth-century critics, such as Ross Chambers, seem to share in this fundamental premise of narrative art that: ". . . stories are not innocent and (that) storytelling not only derives significance from situation but also has the

power to change human situations."²⁸ The preface of the Roman bourgeois claims to be a witness to such an event in "historical reality," as the novel claims to already have manifested its power to change human situation and to act as a morally corrective influence:

C'est ainsi que l'histoire fabuleuse de Lucrèce, que tu verras dans ce livre, a guéri, à ce qu'on m'a assuré, une fille fort considérable de la ville de l'amour qu'elle avait pour un marquis, dont la conclusion, selon toutes les apparences, eût été semblable.(p.24)

The irony in such a statement is that on one hand it appears to be an ultimate proof of the healing power of the text, stemming from the author-doctor's hand, but on the other, there is a rupture in the voice of the preface since it has already been read. Temporal and spatial dimensions are problematized.

In the preface of the Roman bourgeois the power of textual representation is equated with satire as the following passage illustrates:

Ne voit-on pas tous les jours une infinité d'esprits bourrus, d'importuns, d'avares, de chicaneurs, de fanfarons, de coquets et de coquettes? Cependant y a-t-il quelqu'un qui les ose avertir de leurs défauts et de leurs sottises, si ce n'est la comédie ou la satire?(p.23)

But what is comedy and how does it relate to satire and parody? Comedy is said to imply a norm which is common to both author and reader, and is therefore dependent on a distancing of the object of comedy and the subject making the observation. Satire operates in the same manner with the difference that the contextual norm or moral is inscribed in the text. The aim of satire is often to make a negative statement about that which is satirized. Parody can be distinguished from satire in that parody not only implies a norm, but represents a norm. The norm however is presented in an altered fashion, operating on two levels, implicit and explicit.²⁹ As Genette shows in Palimpsestes, parody functions as a deviation from the norm, or background material, through a difference of style, with a resulting discrepancy between mode and subject.³⁰ The balance in parody is generally precarious for as Linda Hutcheon states: "Parodic art both deviates from an aesthetic norm and includes that norm within it as background material."³¹ Irony is most important in parodic play as it generally functions to mark the difference in style in the imitation of previous texts. To cite Hutcheon again, "The pleasure of parody's irony comes not from humor in particular but from the degree of engagement of the reader in the intertextual 'bouncing' (to use E.M. Forster's famous term) between complicity and distance."³²

In the preface of the Roman bourgeois, we see that it is the author/libraire who presents the comic situation, referring to others as "esprits bourrus," "importuns," "avares," etc. Placing himself in a position of authority over such flawed characters, he is the one who possesses knowledge necessary for this evaluation. However, as we have seen, for satire to function the author and reader must share in the norm implicit in the text. The preface demonstrates the dynamics of this shared perspective. The author(s)'s position of power provides that he be able to, on the one hand, refer to others in whatever unbecoming manner he pleases and, on the other, address the reader, inviting him to participate in the experience of the text. The strategy of the preface is in the subtle way in which the reader is integrated in the discourse of the author/libraire resulting in a position of shared authority. The author/libraire begins by calling the reader "Ami," and continues to include him in the basic premises stated by the author. For example: "Mais quand nous voyons le vice tourné en ridicule, nous nous en corrigeons, de peur d'être les objets de la risée publique"(p.23); "Le plaisir que nous prenons à railler les autres est ce qui fait avaler doucement cette médecine qui nous est si salutaire."(p.24) The author even includes the reader in sharing the classical concept of representation:

Et comme un excellent portrait nous demande de l'admiration, quoique nous n'en ayons point pour la personne dépeinte, de même on peut dire que des histoires fabuleuses bien décrites et sous des noms empruntés font plus d'impression sur notre esprit que les vrais noms et les vraies aventures ne sauraient faire.(p.24)(emphasis mine)

This can be interpreted as another example of the power of textual representation, or "histoires fabuleuses," which teach and delight by being "bien décrites." Representation is seen as occupying a superior position to "historical reality" since the "historic" appears as lacking the power to change human consciousness, where the "fictional" appears to lead effectively to such a change. The author(s) continue with the example of how someone who pretends to be hunchbacked will make a greater impression on another hunchback who views him than if he were viewing a truly deformed person: "C'est ainsi que celui qui contrefait le bossu devant un autre bossu lui fait bien mieux sentir son fardeau que la vue d'un autre homme qui aurait une pareille incommodité."(p.24)

With this mention of a hunchbacked person, a slight change in tone can be detected as the reader who has been incorporated into the preface, sharing the same perspective as the author, becomes an object of ridicule in this indirect allusion to the reader's own faults, which places the reader in an inferior position. The author/libraire goes

so far as to caution that in the text virtually no one is exempt from being a subject of ridicule:

Ainsi, quand tu apercevrais dans ces personnages dépeints quelques caractères de quelqu'un de ta connaissance, ne fais point un jugement téméraire pour dire que ce soit lui; prends plutôt garde que, comme il y a ici les portraits de plusieurs sortes de sots, tu n'y rencontres le tien: car il n'y a presque personne qui ait le privilège d'en être exempt, et qui n'y puisse remarquer quelque trait de son visage, moralement parlant.(p.25)

This is a subversion of the bonds of trust, a breach in the narrative contract, which the text attempted to establish earlier in the preface where the reader shared in the author's voice and position of authority, evident by the use of "nous." Now, the reader is reduced to object, as the author addresses him as "tu."³³ There seems to be a subversion of comedy in favor of the parodic, where object and imitation are co-present in the text. Just as the libraire's voice is fragmented into that of author/libraire, here another example of the tendency of the text to fragment the subject appears as the reader/subject is reduced to object.

In addition to the reader, heroic and comic novels are also objects of satire. The preface mocks those who think that they possess a key to unlock the hidden meaning of the novel; as the author(s) states, "la serrure est mêlée." It mocks those who try to find the "Truth" of the novel simply

because the novel is a parody of "Reality." Nothing is excluded from this Pandora's Box of comic relief. Parody runs rampant because nothing is sacred. Even the authority of the author is not absolute as it is a product of a libraire/reader as well as of the primary author. The preface constantly subverts its stated premise and contradicts itself, as the narrative contract is constructed and deconstructed.

The preface as preface is unstable in that it is a palimpsest with the original preface bleeding through as the "libraire" explains: ". . .j'en ai tiré ce que j'ai pu, aussi bien que de plusieurs autres endroits du livre, que j'ai fait accommoder à ma manière. J'en ai fait ôter ce que j'y ai trouvé de trop vieux, j'y ai fait ajouter quelque chose de nouveau pour le mettre à la mode."(p.25) The focus of this passage is on the act of writing with the libraire representing himself as author and, therefore, making himself a character in the preface. This recalls Boyd's contention that a reflexive novel calls attention to its own mechanisms while making the author a character within the story.³⁴

The author/libraire attempts to update the novel by making it "à la mode." He makes the following offer: "Si tu y trouves du goût, je ferai rajuster de même la suite, dont je te ferai un pareil présent, si tu es agréable de le bien

payer."(p.25) When he claims to make a "présent" for the reader, it is in the temporal sense of "présent" and is, ironically, a partial present. The novel relies heavily on intertextual self-referentiality; as a palimpsest it both identifies with and differs from preceding works, especially heroic and pastoral novels:

Que si vous êtes si désireux de voir comme on découvre sa passion, je vous indiquerai plusieurs moyens qui sont dans l'Amadis, dans l'Astrée, dans Cyrus et dans tous les autres romans, que je n'ai pas le loisir ni le dessein de copier. . . (p.66)

Yet this same process is at work within the preface as well as the author/libraire states: "...j'y ai fait ajouter quelque chose de nouveau pour le mettre à la mode."(p.25) "Deferral" therefore operates to distance the "original" text from the "present" one. This creates a division between literary norms which are at a given time acceptable but which at other times may vary. This subverts the accepted concept of the function of art to teach and delight since that which is an acceptable art form is not absolute, but limited by temporal bounds and requirements dictated by the taste of a particular period. Furthermore, the "présent" is built on an interaction between reader and text, in the sense that the text exists through its being read. Were it not for the reader, the text would be nothing more than ink marks on paper. Yet, in reading the preface as well as the

novel itself, the reader is made aware that the "présent" offered by the author/libraire is built on the tension created between presence and absence, as the preface itself is a product of absence. It is not the original, but a rewritten version of the original one: ". . .tout ce que je t'ai dit a été tiré d'une longue préface que l'auteur même avait mise au-devant du livre."(p.25) The "présent" cannot be complete for the same reason that the preface cannot mark the beginning of the novel since they are both dependent on and independent of other previously written texts.

The exchange between reader and text duplicates the exchange of money needed to purchase the novel. The "libraire" not only functions as a creator of the text in literary terms, he is, as becomes evident in the preface, also its creator in economic terms as he provides for the manufacture of the text. Monetary gain, therefore, becomes the impetus for his becoming an "author" of the text, providing for the publication of the book, and allowing the text to realize its potential as text when purchased and read by the public. The act of reading itself is very much caught up in economic implications; it is not a gratuitous act in that to be a reader of the book, as the libraire states, one must first buy it: "Ami, lecteur, quoique tu n'achètes et ne lises ce livre que pour ton plaisir, si néanmoins tu n'y trouvais autre chose, tu devrais avoir

regret à ton temps et à ton argent".(p.23) According to the "libraire", therefore, money becomes a mesure of a competent reader, who will "get his money's worth" by reading for more than just pleasure.

Here one can examine the oxymoron in the title: "Roman bourgeois." The contradiction duplicates that of "Fiction" and "Reality," present throughout the entire preface. The preface constantly attempts to break the boundaries of "fiction" and "reality" with fiction's claiming to function as reality as well as reality becoming a product of fiction. This process emphasizes that the referential system in the novel is rooted in fiction and thereby is separate from physical reality. Both terms, novel and bourgeois, mirror the attributes which society contributes to them.

The act of breaking new ground through a re-evaluation of the conventions of the novel actively continues in the preface of Book Two as it serves both as continuation and as rupture of the premises established in the first preface. The play of assimilation and distancing occurs from the outset of the second preface in that within the novel's linear construction, the preface of the second book serves as a bridge between the two books which, therefore, become joined forming an apparently complete literary body, with each episode part of a greater whole which in turn furnishes

the various episodes with a broader identity under the umbrella of a shared title.

The irony in the preface of Book Two lies in the fact that although its apparent role is to act as link between two books of the novel, it actually serves to distance the two books, as well as to destroy the element of "good faith" in the rapport between author and reader. As we have seen, the preface in Book One played with this concept of "good faith" in that the author first attempted to share his "insider's" view with the reader, then proceeded to dissociate himself from the reader in associating the reader with the hunchback, the object of comic ridicule. However, in the second preface the author portrays himself as occupying a fundamentally superior position in that he has the power to trick and to dupe the reader: "Si vous vous attendez, Lecteur, que ce livre soit la suite du premier, et qu'il y ait une connexité nécessaire entre eux, vous êtes pris pour dupe." (p.167) The author shows himself to be not only the fundamental creator of the work, but the fundamental destroyer of his own creation, with the leeway to reconstruct the work at any given point. The reader therefore does not gain a privileged position from being a "trained" reader of novels thoroughly familiar with intertextual referentiality: "N'attendez pas non plus que je réserve à marier tous mes personnages à la fin du livre, ou

on voit d'ordinaire célébrer autant de noces qu'à un carnaval. . ."(p.167) It is precisely because the reader addressed by the author is one who is so well-versed in literature that the author wields such commanding power in his position of "author-ity," as he plays upon the reader's knowledge and expectations.

The apparent capriciousness of the author involves another fundamental aspect of the Roman bourgeois: a basic resistance to closure. The author's penchant for fragmentation is evident throughout the preface:

Prenez donc cela pour des historiettes séparées, si bon vous semble, et ne demandez point que j'observe ni l'unité des temps ni des lieux, ni que je fasse voir un héros dominant dans toute la pièce.(p.167)

Nevertheless, the author does not hesitate to echo the claim made by authors of serious novels whose stated purpose is to present a "logical" or "realistic" and therefore more plausible narrative:

Mais il n'en est pas de même de ce très véritable et très sincère récit, auquel je ne donne que la forme, sans altérer aucunement la matière. Ce sont de petites histoires et aventures arrivées en divers quartiers de la ville, qui n'ont rien de commun ensemble, et que je tâche de rapprocher les unes des autres autant qu'il m'est possible. (p.167)

This statement stands in sharp contrast to what is stated in the first preface: ". . .il n'y a rien que de fabuleux dans ce livre. . .".(p.24) The author's stated purpose then, passes from presenting a story which is "vraisemblable" to one which is "véritable." Yet, the author has already deconstructed the concept of "Reality" in fiction to the degree that their relationship becomes one of paradox. The author has already disrupted the reader's willing suspension of disbelief. Those aspects of the novel which claim to be deeply rooted in the context of recognizable and accepted aspects of "Reality" are continuously subverted by the "Fictional" text to the extent that the text establishes its identity as being "Real Fiction." This recalls the property of metafiction which, according to Hutcheon, forces the reader to live in a world that he must acknowledge as fictional.³⁵

For the author this "Real Fiction" cannot be encapsulated under the heading of "Novel" alone. The work straddles the limits of classification when on one hand it calls itself "Roman" while the preface states, ". . .ne l'appellez plus roman, et il ne vous choquera point. . .".(p.167) and on the other, the author indicates his preference for a more noble genre, ". . .sachez que cet enchaînement d'intrigues les unes avec les autres est bien séant à ces poèmes héroïques et fabuleux où l'on peut

tailler et rogner à sa fantaisie."(p.167) Through the appeal to ancient forms to provide inspiration for originality, the author demonstrates a fundamental strategy of the work which is to parody literary works which have come before.

The contradictory function of the preface as it plays upon the gap between being both in and out of paratextual norms, serves as a paradigm for the contradictory nature of this novel. This is especially evident, as we have seen in the problem of the author's credibility and identity, the shifting role of the reader as both subject and object, and the fictionalizing of "Reality," which in turn relates to the general dilemma of representation.³⁶ Representation is made problematic on three levels in the novel: In the representation of subjectivity (in the voice of the narrator representing himself); in the representation of literary codes (in the play of intertextual allusions); and by description as representation (where the narrative plays upon the gaps inherent in representing three-dimensional reality in fiction).

The parody present throughout unifies the work, and provides for the interplay of presence and absence. As the preface on one hand claims to present a "previously" written preface and, on the other, focuses on the act of writing, the preface exposes both the process of textual representation as well as the process of textual creation,

both primary objectives of a reflexive novel.

Chapter 3

Framing the Narrative: The Narrator in the Roman bourgeois

Generally, it can be said that in serious novels the plot is an organizing force. The plot of the Roman bourgeois, as the following summary should show, is not conventional in that it offers neither coherent intrigue nor well-elaborated characters: The first book of the novel is primarily concerned with two bourgeois girls, Javotte and Lucrèce, who are of age to marry. The first one, Javotte, is the epitome of innocence and purity. Her father, Vollichon, a lawyer, represents for his part the bourgeois status quo in his concern for acquiring wealth and power. In his desire to exercise power over his family, he has been instrumental in keeping his daughter completely ignorant, especially in matters of love. Her beauty however cannot be hidden. She attracts a suitor, Nicodème, who is a handsome and bright lawyer. He has dealings with the court and, therefore, has considerable social standing, as is evident by his dress, which is always of the latest style. Vollichon is impressed, but Javotte is indifferent. Another suitor arrives on the scene, Jean Bedout, who cannot compare to the attractive Nicodème. Yet Bedout possesses a considerable fortune, more than the other suitor, and thus he is seen as offering Javotte's family more stability and financial security.

Javotte is far from indifferent. In this instance, she is horrified at the thought of marrying such an unattractive man. She refuses to sign the marriage contract (this is the second one, since one had been drawn up with Nicodème). Javotte, who had begun to frequent a literary salon, falls in love with a charming noble, Pancrace. He had managed to awaken her latent passion by having her read L'Astrée and other novels. She is sent off to a convent, but escapes to Pancrace's chateau.

The other young heroine of the first book, Lucrèce, lives with her uncle who is a lawyer as well and who grants her much more freedom. Her aunt, on the other hand, is only interested in playing cards. Therefore Lucrèce is allowed to flirt with all those who come to play cards at her aunt's salon. She becomes involved with a marquis who, after making a promise of marriage, abandons her when he finds out that she is pregnant. She then tricks Nicodème into making her a marriage contract although, at that time, he is still engaged to Javotte. News of Nicodème's marriage contract with Lucrèce spreads and eventually provides further reason for Vollichon to want to dissolve the contract in favor of Jean Bedout's. Lucrèce must flee to a convent, where she becomes the model of saintliness. As it happens, Javotte is also living there at that time. When the time approaches for the baby to be born, Lucrèce goes to an even stricter

convent. The book ends with Lucrece meeting and marrying Jean Bedout.

In the second book, we meet Collantine, an extremely ugly woman who is also very disagreeable. She has only one passion which is to plead and contest court cases. She communicates to others only in a hostile manner. However, she manages to have relationships with two men, Charroselles and Belastre. These relationships could be classified as a mixture of burning hatred and passionate love. Belastre, who is a complete imbecile, manages to acquire a judgeship and proceeds to woo Collantine. He is eventually outsmarted by her. She finds Charroselles much more challenging since she cannot outwit him so easily. Charroselles is a frustrated novelist who was first introduced in the novel's first book as a fixture at the salon frequented by Javotte. Collantine and Charroselle end up marrying and immediately continue their interminable arguing.

This summary does not include one essential element: the interventions of the narrator which are present throughout the text. The narrator acts as a framing device of the entire work, where through his comments, criticisms and conflicting statements, he draws the reader's attention to the mechanics of the story-telling process.

With the emphasis in the Roman bourgeois on the narrator who is telling the story instead of on the story

itself, the narrator emerges as the novel's main character. The identity of this narrator differs greatly from those in other comic novels of the period. In Francion, the narrator situates himself in relation to other characters, as he speaks of them recounting their adventures, or of their not wanting him to overhear their conversations. In the Roman comique, the narrator functions as a man who is removed from the world: ". . .mais il y a longtemps, comme tout le monde sait, que j'ai renoncé à toutes les vanités du monde."³⁷ In the Roman bourgeois we never have the impression that he is representing himself as a three-dimensional "human" figure. What we have is contradictory, multiple voices of narration from the opening of the novel: "Je chante les amours et les aventures de plusieurs bourgeois de Paris. . . (p.29)

By stating, "Je chante," the narrator claims to be the voice of representation in the elevated style of Virgil. Yet the style does not relate to the mundane subject since his premise is to tell of "les aventures de plusieurs bourgeois de Paris." The narrator would appear to function as the text's organizer, recounting, as an historian would, the events in a manner which respects the standards of vraisemblance, in order to make the story appear as if it really happened. Yet the narrator's stating, "Je chante," calls attention to his presence and brings to the reader's attention what should be a transparent narrative framework.

By calling attention to himself, the narrator is also calling attention to the fictional nature of the text. The narrator's overt manner of auto-representation serves to disrupt the process of representation, which relies on a willing suspension of disbelief on the part of the reader.

The opening passage of the novel continues:

Je chante les amours et les aventures de plusieurs bourgeois de Paris, de l'un et de l'autre sexe; et ce qui est de plus merveillieux, c'est que je les chante, et si je ne sais pas la musique. Mais puisqu'un roman n'est rien qu'une poésie en prose, je croirais mal débiter si je ne suivais l'exemple de mes maîtres, et si je faisais un autre exorde: car, depuis que feu Virgile a chanté Enée et ses armes, et que Le Tasse, de poétique mémoire, a distingué son ouvrage par chants, leurs successeurs, qui n'étaient pas meilleurs musiciens que moi, ont tous répété la même chanson, et ont commencé d'entonner sur la même note. (p.29)

The mundane subject of the novel contrasts with the elevated style of the narrator, who claims to sing of love and follow in the tradition of Virgil. This attempt parodies the epic formula. The parody continues as the narrator literalizes the metaphor of chanter, stating "je ne sais pas la musique." He ends by criticizing uninspired imitators in whose works the literary tradition is reduced to the level of literary cliché.

The "Je" of this passage is the narrator, who functions as author/narrator since he claims to be singing his own song. His position in the text is established as superior to

all others since he acts as the creator of the text presenting his own story. This opening statement can be viewed as a second preface with the narrator, acting as author/narrator, establishing himself as the authorial voice of the text, as well as positing the temporal and spatial coordinates of the work (i.e. contemporary Paris).

This process is reminiscent of the novel's first preface, where the voices of the author and libraire merge, resulting in an ambiguous authority. Here in the novel the author's voice takes on multiple identities. On one hand, he is the creator or god of the text, possessing ultimate freedom in his position of "author-ity." On the other, through his superior position as author, and having the capacity of auto-representation he can paint himself in any fashion that he chooses. Thus, he places himself in the ranks of Virgil and Tasso's followers, seen as worthless imitators who "ont tous répété la même chanson." Thus, the freedom and power evident in the enunciation "Je chante" allow for its apparent negation when followed by "je ne sais pas la musique." This serves as the first exemple of how the narrator profits from the freedom to criticize, not only the plot and the characters, but also himself. He alone has the power to present himself as both subject and object, Self and Other, in the play of fiction.

The opening passage continues: "Cependant je ne pousserai pas bien loin mon imitation; car je ne ferai point d'abord une invocation des Muses." This demonstrates another characteristic of the narrator: that he is consistently inconsistent. Just after presenting himself as an imitator of Virgil, he states that he will not follow in that tradition, refusing to begin the work with an invocation to the Muses.

In the same manner, the narrator makes the following claim: "Au lieu de vous tromper par ces vaines subtilités, je vous raconterai sincèrement et avec fidélité plusieurs historiettes ou galanteries arrivées entre des personnes qui ne seront ni héros ni héroïnes. . . "(p.30)(emphasis mine) Thus, he claims to act as an historian.

The passage ends, however, on a much different note:

. . .qui ne dresseront point d'armées, ni ne renverseront point de royaumes, mais qui seront de ces bonnes gens de médiocre condition, qui vont tout doucement leur grand chemin, dont le uns seront beaux et les autres laids, les uns sages et les autres sots; et ceux-ci ont bien la mine de composer le plus grand nombre. . . (p.30)(emphasis mine)

The passage ends as satire with the narrator's referring to most of the characters as "sots." This act of name calling seems to undermine the narrator's role as a simple historian, as he functions also as a satirist.

To complicate the matter further, at other moments the narrator appears omniscient:

Lucrèce avait accoutumé son amant à souffrir qu'elle entretint, comme elle avait toujours fait, tous ceux qui viendraient chez elle. Particulièrement depuis sa faute, que le remords de sa conscience lui faisait plus publique qu'elle n'était. . .(p. 70)(emphasis mine)

In his position of authority he claims to have invented parts of the story:

Nos amants n'étaient point de condition à avoir de tels officiers, de sorte que je n'en ai rien pu apprendre que ce qui en a paru en public; . . mais j'en ai appris un peu de l'un et un peu de l'autre, et, à n'en point mentir, j'y ai mis aussi un peu du mien."(p.66)(emphasis mine)

In a similar vein, through narrational double-talk, the novel as moral is put into question. From the preface of Book One, where the author/libraire states that a function of the novel is to provide a sort of mirror where the reader will be able to see himself reflected in the flaws of the characters, the text offers numerous allusions to its moral function. Other examples of the novel pretending to be a moral are evident in its alert on the danger of reading novels when one is ignorant of their power of seduction, as shown in the episode of Javotte's literal reading of L'Astrée and as well as by Cupid's temporary lapse in the

allegory of the "Historiette de l'amour égaré." Yet, the narrator's role as moralist is subverted by his own statement: "Je n'écris point ici une morale, mais seulement une histoire. Je ne suis pas obligé de la justifier . . ."(p.158)

It becomes evident then that the identity and role of this narrator is not easily determined as he claims to be author, historian, satirist, moralist, etc. Instead he appears rather like a chameleon as he adopts these different identities. These passages illustrate his tendency to construct a series of identities which negate or deconstruct one another. Thus, the process of auto-representation is made problematic since it serves to destabilize the subject, whose identity is deconstructed with each contradiction. In his role of author/narrator, the narrator is able to parody the identities (author, historian, satirist, moralist, etc.) normally attributed to a narrator, thus emphasizing that each identity is a product of literary history, based on literary norms, and essentially a fictional construct. The text therefore doubles back on itself as it is concerned with exploring its own nature as literary text using literary devices and models. Since the narrator functions as a purely textual device he can enjoy boundless play through manipulating language in the realm of fiction.

The novel further distances itself from promoting the illusion of "reality" in fiction by making the object of representation in fiction problematic:

Un autre auteur moins sincère, et qui voudrait paraître éloquent, ne manquerait jamais de faire ici une description magnifique de cette place. Il commencerait son éloge par l'origine de son nom; il dirait qu'elle a été anoblíe par ce fameux docteur Albert le Grand, qui y tenait son école, et qu'elle fut appelée autrefois la place de Me Albert, et, par succession de temps, la place Maubert. Que si, par occasion, il écrivait la vie et les ouvrages de son illustre parrain, il ne serait pas le premier qui aurait fait une digression aussi peu à propos. Après cela il la bâtirait superbement selon la dépense qu'y voudrait faire son imagination. Le dessin de la place Royale ne le contenterait pas; il faudrait du moins qu'elle fût aussi belle que celle où se faisaient les carrousels, dans la galante et romanesque ville de Grenade. (p.30)

The narrator is not presenting the Place Maubert as it exists in its physical dimensions in the heart of Paris. He is, instead, painting the Place Maubert as fiction, as it could hypothetically appear in another text, that of "un autre auteur moins sincère, qui voudrait paraître éloquent." However, there is no evidence that this description of the Place Maubert is an intertextual reference. The narrator then presents himself as "Other" ("un auteur moins sincère") since the passage is ultimately auto-referential, existing in no other text but the narrator's own. Thus, the domain of the narrator extends to the realm of non-narrator by his non-description of the Place Maubert. Through this

manipulation of narrational techniques, the normal function of intertextual references is deconstructed since it stands as an illusion.

The description of Place Maubert continues:

N'ayez pas peur qu'il allât vous dire (comme il est vrai) que c'est une place triangulaire, entourée de maisons fort communes pour loger de la bourgeoisie; il se pendrait plutôt qu'il ne la fît carrée, qu'il ne changeât toutes les boutiques en porches et galeries, tous les auvents en balcons, et toutes les chaînes de pierres de taille en beaux pilastres. (pp.30-31)

The narrator underscores that the "real" referent will remain outside of fiction, as he shows the distortion which can occur in representing that which is three-dimensional in fiction. This passage further relates the manner in which the author has the power to create the "fictional" referent, one that can be totally independent of and incompatible with the "real" one. This relates once again to Michael Boyd's definition of the reflexive novel: "Fiction that looked at itself, that was reflexive, would not be creating yet another fictional world that needed to be related to the 'real' world: it would take as its 'object' the relationship between 'real' and fictional worlds."³⁸

In the following passage, the narrator continues to play on the same theme:

Certainement la quôteuse était belle, et si elle eût été née hors la bourgeoisie, je veux dire si elle eût été élevée parmi le beau monde, elle pouvait donner beaucoup d'amour à un honnête homme. N'attendez pas pourtant que je vous la décrive ici, comme on a coutume de faire en ces occasions; car, quand je vous aurais dit qu'elle était de la riche taille, qu'elle avait les yeux bleus et bien fendus, les cheveux blonds et bien frisés, et plusieurs autres particularités de sa personne, vous ne la reconnaîtriez pas pour cela, et ce ne serait pas à dire qu'elle fût entièrement belle; car elle pourrait avoir des taches de rousseur, ou des marques de petite vérole. (p.33)

The narrator emphasizes the problem of representing physical reality through language because, as he states, "vous ne la reconnaîtriez pas pour cela." He deals only with fiction, not "reality," which is left to its own separate and independent realm. His realm is the play of fiction with himself in control representing the playmaker.

The narrator's position of authority allows him the freedom to act as judge in the text. He appears as a literary critic since he comments on that which is literary and not reality. This is another element which relates this novel to metafiction or the reflexive novels: "Because they do not seek to tell yet another story but to examine the story-telling process itself, reflexive novels must be seen as works of literary theory and criticism. . ."39 The author/narrator is in a position to create, through language, an entire universe which functions through a

referential system of his creation, with the result that "fiction" becomes its own independent reality.

The following passage shows how an author uses language like an architect uses raw materials to construct a referent:

Mais quand il viendrait à décrire l'église des Carmes, ce serait lors que l'architecture jouerait son jeu, et aurait peut-être beaucoup à souffrir. Il vous ferait voir un temple aussi beau que celui de Diane d'Ephèse; il le ferait soutenir par cent colonnes corinthiennes; il remplirait les niches de statues faites de la main de Phidias ou de Praxitèle; il raconterait les histoires figurées dans les bas-reliefs; il ferait l'autel de jaspe et de porphyre; et, s'il lui en prenait fantaisie, tout l'édifice: car, dans le pays des romans, les pierres précieuses ne coûtent pas plus que la brique et que le moellon. . . C'est aussi ce qui rend les auteurs si friands de telles descriptions, qu'ils ne laissent passer aucune occasion d'en faire; et ils les tirent tellement par les cheveux, que, même pour loger un corsaire qui est vagabond et qui porte tout son bien avec soi, ils lui bâtissent un palais plus beau que le Louvre ni que le Sêrail. (p.31)

However, after illustrating the wealth of resources that language offers an author to represent referents which are "plus beau que le Louvre," he immediately deviates from the model:

Grâce à ma naïveté, je suis déchargé de toutes ces peines, et quoique toutes ces belles choses se fassent pour la décoration du théâtre à fort peu de frais, j'aime mieux faire jouer cette pièce sans pompe et sans appareil, comme ces comédies qui se jouent chez le bourgeois avec un simple

paravent. De sorte que je ne veux pas même vous dire comment est faite cette église, quoiqu'assez célèbre: car ceux qui ne l'ont point vue la peuvent aller voir, si bon leur semble, ou la bâtir dans leur imagination comme il leur plaira. (p.31)

This passage differs from previous ones in that the narrator states that he will not describe the church, and indeed does not. This silence in the text could then be viewed as an emblem of the inadequacy of language to represent physical "reality," as the text, by its silence, refuses to act as a mediator between the referent (the Eglise des Carmes) and the reader who can put down the book and go see the "real" church. This passage could also be read as the narrator's desire to produce a text which is more powerful, through the economy of its presentation ("sans pompe et sans appareil") than other more traditional texts.

The text is further removed from the "real" by the theatrical allusions made in this passage, which serve to reinforce the notion that the text is not representing "real reality" but instead "fiction" as the narrator claims to "faire jouer cette pièce." There is an added twist, however, as the narrator acts as a metteur en scene of a bourgeois play. If he were a "real" metteur en scene, his role would be to try to overcome the barriers separating "real" and "textual" reality. His task would be to present a

representation of fiction in the realm of the physical. Flesh and blood actors would represent fictional characters and physical movement and three-dimensional decor would represent the text's descriptions and stage directions. There appears a mise en abyme as the text functions as a representation of a representation.⁴⁰

The following passage presents an apparent abdication of the narrator's role as metteur en scene as it suggests that any narrator or reader could take this narrator's place: "J'ai pensé même de commander à l'imprimeur de laisser en cet endroit du papier blanc, pour y transplanter plus commodément celui que vous auriez choisi, afin que vous pussiez l'y placer." (p.157) The narrator gives the impression of opting for silence in that a blank page can exist only when the words of the narrator are absent. The blank page seems to represent the narrator/author's desire to have the narratee or reader act as a co-author of the text, as both reader and author. The blank page does not exist in either physical reality, since it lacks three-dimensional form, or in fictional reality since it is simply alluded to by the narrator: "J'ai pensé même de commander à l'imprimeur . . ." The result is the subversion of the narratee or reader as co-author since he is not allowed to have a voice in the text. Despite allusions to the contrary, the narrative is ultimately the product of the

author/narrator whose voice, although constantly deconstructing itself, remains the lone voice of the text.

Direct and indirect reference is made to various texts throughout the work. In parodying these texts, the author as narrator must first have read them:

Que si vous êtes si désireux de voir comme on découvre sa passion, je vous en indiquerai plusieurs moyens qui sont dans l'Amadis, dans l'Astrée, dans Cyrus et dans tous les autres romans, que je n'ai pas le loisir ni le dessein de copier ni de dérober, comme ont fait la plupart des auteurs, qui se sont servis des inventions de ceux qui avaient écrit auparavant eux. (p.66)

In repeatedly making allusion to other authors as worthless imitators, the text plays on the tension produced by the introduction of intertextual allusions which are either mocked or ultimately silenced. The narrator claims that through numerous repetitions in various heroic and pastoral novels literary strategies, such as amorous intrigues or eloquent descriptions, have lost all power of seduction and have been reduced to clichés.⁴¹

There is a determined resistance to incorporate clichés of narrative situations into this text, omitting elements "car je les ouï dire mille fois." (p.72) The narrator explains further:

. . . vous devez savoir 20 ou 30 de ces entretiens par coeur, pour peu que vous ayez de

mémoire. Ils sont si communs que j'ai vu des gens qui, pour marquer l'endroit où ils en étaient d'une histoire, disaient: J'en suis au huitième enlèvement, au lieu de dire: J'en suis au huitième tome. . . Un plus grand orateur ou poète que moi, quelque inventif qu'il fût, ne vous pourrait rien faire lire que vous n'eussiez vu cent fois. (pp.156-7)

However, the text itself does play upon the very clichés that it parodies. The plot does revolve around love triangles and is at times propelled by certain "coincidences" such as when Villeflatin, a friend of both Lucrèce's uncle and Javotte's father, finds Lucrèce in the midst of searching for the marriage contract that the Marquis has written. When he sees that there is another one made by Nicodème he takes it upon himself to inform Javotte's father, thus eventually ending the engagement between Javotte and Nicodème.

Yet at other times when clichés appear, the narrator seems compelled to defend his use of them, as in the passage when Lucrèce and Javotte end up in the same convent:

Le hasard voulut que ce fût dans le même couvent où on avait mis en pension Javotte. Je ne crois pas néanmoins que ce hasard serve de rien à l'histoire, ni fasse aucun bel événement dans la suite; mais, par une maudite coutume qui règne il y a longtemps dans les romans, tous les personnages sont sujets à se rencontrer inopinément dans les lieux les plus éloignés, quelque route qu'ils puissent prendre, ou quelque différent dessein qu'ils puissent avoir. Cela est toujours bon à quelque chose, et épargne une nouvelle description, quand on est exact à en

faire de tous les lieux dont on fait mention, ainsi que font les auteurs qui veulent faire de gros volumes, et qui les enflent comme les bouchers font la viande qu'ils apprêtent. En tout cas, ces rencontres donnent quelque liaison et connexité à l'ouvrage, qui sans cela serait souvent fort disloqué. (p.160)

What these passages appear to illustrate is the difference between reinscription and representation. The narrative cliché, as reinscription, can be understood here as the degree zero of narrative, since it appears as pure repetition, devoid of any value in itself. However, value and meaning lie in an artististic representation of a literary convention which would be original in style. The narrator complains that this is not the case:

Il n'y eut point de portrait, ni de montre, ni de bracelet de cheveux qui fût pris ou égarée, ou qui eût passé en d'autres mains, point d'absence ni de fausse nouvelle de mort ou de changement d'amour, point de rivale jalouse qui fût faire quelque fausse vision ou équivoque, qui sont toutes les choses nécessaires et les matériaux les plus communs pour bâtir des intrigues de romans, inventions qu'on a mises en tant de formes et qu'on a rapetassées si souvent qu'elles sont toutes usées. (pp. 69-70)

These narrative clichés have been used so often that they have neither value nor meaning.

When the narrator makes use of what might be considered narrative clichés, they often present an interesting twist. For example, the cliché of having two heroines meet at the

same convent is important because it allows them to tell the stories of their lives to one another. The process further underscores the instability in representation since they do not tell their stories "truthfully."

The narrator as framing device of the narrative problematizes "art as mimesis." Traditionally, the narrator's voice purports to communicate a "real" referent. Yet, in the Roman bourgeois referentiality is clearly rooted in the fictional, beginning with the narrator's voice whose overt presence underlies the problem of representation in fiction. Hutcheon has found it necessary in such a case to redefine the dual problem of art as mimesis. On one hand she establishes a mimesis of product where the reader is required to identify the products being imitated -- characters, actions, settings -- and recognize their similarity to those in empirical reality, in order to validate their literary worth. On the other hand she establishes a mimesis of process which exposes the conventions and disrupts the literary codes which now must be acknowledged.⁴² Mimesis of product can be understood then as fiction imitating "reality," whereas in mimesis of process fiction imitates "fiction." It is mimesis of process which functions in the Roman bourgeois.

In relating this concept to the narrator of the Roman bourgeois, it appears that the narrator through

auto-representation and auto-criticism can be viewed as imitating himself, since his identity appears as a fusion of models (satirists, moralists, historians, etc.) formed in literature itself. The narrator's voice then emphasizes textual creation as process. Furthermore, the process of auto-representation and auto-criticism by the narrator seem analogous to the metafictional process, as both include within themselves a commentary on their own "identity."

As we have seen, the narrator has used descriptions of the Place Maubert, the Eglise des Carmes and Javotte (la belle quêteuse) to focus on the process of writing fiction instead of aiming to achieve mimesis of product in the text. He underscores the problematic of representing "nature" or "reality" through language into a literary context by going so far as to invite the reader to put down the novel and stroll through Paris to see the "real" Place Maubert and Eglise des Carmes. In this way the text affirms the independence of fictional referents and three-dimensional fictional referents.

This does not neatly conform to the classical doctrine: "Art as mimesis: classical rhetoric granted a certain liberty to the imitators of nature by sanctioning deviations for purposes of instruction or delight."⁴³ The narrator in the Roman bourgeois plays on the gap, the "certain liberty," separating Nature and Art. The novel claims to conform (at

times) to the classical doctrine's moral aim that art should teach and delight. Yet the narrator makes the counterclaim that the work is not a moral: "Je n'écris point ici une morale, mais seulement une histoire. Je ne suis pas obligé de la justifier. . ."(p.158) It seems as though he is playing with the gap between "reality" and art, parodying the didactic claim made by those authors who chose to ignore the gap, believing perhaps that Nature and Art function interchangeably? The interest of the novel's moral lies in how it functions as a textual construct, rather than in the lessons that it claims to teach.

"The essence of literary language lies not in its conforming to the kind of statement found in factual studies, but in its ability to create something new -- a coherent, motivated 'heterocosm,' or other world."⁴⁴ In the Roman bourgeois the heretocosm emerges as an exposition of the power and freedom of creation of the author as narrator.

As we have seen, at play throughout the text is the narrator's power and freedom of creation: he refuses to describe the Place Maubert while describing it; he refuses to incorporate clichés into the text while ultimately incorporating them; he invites the reader to be a co-creator in the text, but does not give him a voice. In the true vein of parody, all that is established must be questioned, altered or destroyed. The narrator pretends on one hand to

recount that which could be considered public record, insisting that that which is written is historically "true," and even going to great lengths to explain why for example he cannot know the intimate details of Lucrece's affair with the Marquis because neither had a confidant who could tell him of these goings on. Yet on the other hand, he admits to having fabricated the details of the story.

In further exploring the "heterocosm" of the novel, the paradox remains that in spite of the certainty of the narrator's voice throughout the work, there remains the uncertainty of a well-structured "reality." However, through all of its contradictions, subversions and digressions it remains a novel, an ordering of language into a literary mode. Ironically, the order is often essentially chaotic with emphasis on form rather than content, on literary devices rather than on "historical" referentiality.

Chapter 4

Silent Voice of the Text: The Narratee

The emphasis in the Roman bourgeois on the fictional nature of the referent, as voiced by the narrator implicates the receiver, or "you," into the referential play of the text. This receiver (i.e. reader) of the text is central to many levels of discourse. In critical theory, the nature and role of the reader has been a subject of lively debate among such scholars as Jakobson, Booth, Fish, Iser, Felman, Genette and Prince, to name but a few.

This chapter will explore the identity and function of the narratee, who it will be shown is distinct from the implied reader and the actual reader. A basic definition of the narratee is furnished by Prince: The narratee must know the language and the grammatical denotations of the text; he possesses a certain ability to reason, which is often simply corollary; he can only follow a text in a specific way, formulating an understanding by going from the first page to the last; he is devoid of all personality; and he knows nothing of the events or characters in question.⁴⁵

For every narrator there is a narratee on whom the narrator depends to receive the text. As receiver of the text, the narratee functions as a device of the narrator. For that reason, this study of the narratee will often

entail speaking about the narrator. In the Roman bourgeois the narrator always remains in a position of authority, even when he claims to relinquish it pretending that the narratee has the power to make observations which are independent or "outside" of the text:

. . .je ne veux pas même vous dire comment est faite cette église, quoiqu'assez célèbre: car ceux qui ne l'ont point vue la peuvent aller voir, si bon leur semble, ou la bâtir dans leur imagination comme il leur plaira. . .(p.31)

The narrator also claims that the narratee is free to formulate his own opinions independently of the narrator: "Je n'ose dire assurément laquelle elle (Javotte) avait de ces trois belles qualités; vous en jugerez vous-même par la suite.(p.34) (emphasis mine) Near the end of the first book he states:

. . .je vous avouerai franchement que, si je n'ai pas écrit le combat de l'amour et de la vertu de Javotte, c'est que je n'en ai point eu de mémoires particuliers; il dépendra de vous d'avoir bonne ou mauvaise opinion de sa conduite."(p.158) (emphasis mine)

The narrator also claims to be sensitive to the narratee's desire to have a logical order to the story: "Or, pour vous dire d'où venait cette opposition (car je crois que vous en avez curiosité) il faut remonter plus

haut."(p.45) (emphasis mine) The narrator even pretends that the narratee could be a potential writer of the novel:

J'ai pensé même de commander à l'imprimeur de laisser en cet endroit du papier blanc, pour y transplanter plus commodément celui que vous auriez choisi, afin que vous pussiez l'y placer."(p.157)

Prince claims that a narratee can only follow the text in a specific way, formulating an understanding by going from the first page to the last. As the Roman bourgeois progresses, the referential system which defines the scope of the narratee's knowledge expands, forming a more complete heterocosm as characters, events, and language itself are defined through their usage in the text. Therefore, the narratee is completely "within" the text, formed as the text unfolds. But, in this novel the narratee is also invited to be a co-author of the text, called upon to fill in silences or gaps in the text. However, the narrator's ploy here is subversive because the narratee has no voice with which to fill the text's silences. The narratee's role as receiver of the text and his function as device of the narrator make for his being silenced by the very text which calls upon his participation, thus reinforcing the ultimate authority of the narrator.

In the Roman bourgeois the narrator and the narratee have a shared idiom which separates them from the likes of

the bourgeois Vollichon: "D'autre côté, Vollichon ne voulait avoir pour gendre qu'un homme de sac et de corde. C'est ainsi qu'il appelait en sa langue celui que nous dirions en la nôtre; qui est fort attaché au Palais. . ."(p.43)(emphasis mine) The narratee is therefore associated with the aristocracy as is the narrator. This class distinction implies social boundaries, both ideological and economic, separating the narratee from the bourgeoisie. The common link between the narratee and the narrator becomes language itself. However, the narratee possesses not only the language, but also (to some degree) its product, literature: "Un plus grand orateur ou poète que moi, quelque inventif qu'il fût, ne vous pourrait rien faire lire que vous n'eussiez vu cent fois."(p.157) The text implies that the narratee is knowledgeable in such areas as mythology, the Bible, almanacs, and especially heroic and comic novels. So, it appears that he is representative of the reader-type of seventeenth-century novels. He is associated with the aristocracy (as opposed to the bourgeoisie). The narratee's affiliation with the aristocracy becomes evident, as the text presents what can be seen as his own condescending attitude toward the bourgeoisie:

Au lieu de vous tromper par ces vaines subtilités,
je vous raconterai sincèrement et avec fidélité
plusieurs historiettes ou galanteries arrivées
entre des personnes qui ne seront ni héros ni

héroïnes, qui ne dresseront point d'armées, ni ne renverseront point de royaumes, mais qui seront de ces bonnes gens de médiocre condition, qui vont tout doucement leur grand chemin, dont les uns seront beaux et les autres laids, les uns sages et les autres sots; et ceux-ci ont bien la mine de composer le plus grand nombre. (p.30)

On the other hand, the narrator appears to place the narratee among the "sots," in spite of his apparently higher social standing when compared to the bourgeoisie, as the passage continues; "Cela n'empêchera pas que quelques gens de la plus haute volée ne s'y puissent reconnaître, et ne profitent de l'exemple de plusieurs ridicules dont ils pensent être fort éloignés."(p.30) The irony of this passage is that it first takes the view that the narratee is superior to the bourgeoisie and then proceeds to discount it by claiming that the narratee possesses many of the same characteristics which make a bourgeois ridiculous. Thus the narrator establishes himself as judge over all who might possess flaws in character.

The narratee is also presented as being motivated by curiosity, wishing to have all questions pertaining to the text answered as he appears to be an inquisitive reader: "Or, pour vous dire d'où venait cette opposition (car je crois que vous en avez curiosité) il faut remonter un peu plus haut. . ."(p.45) This reinforces the narrator's power as he recruits the narratee's desire and uses it to promote his story: "Il est seulement besoin que je vous déclare quel

fut le succès de son amour; car vous serez sans doute curieux de savoir si Lucrece fut douce ou cruelle. . ."

(p.66) In implicating the narratee's desire, the narrator makes use of a strategy proposed by Chambers in Story and Situation "whereby narrative conforms to the (projected) desires of the other in order to bring about its own desire to narrate, is constitutive of the narrative situation as such."⁴⁶

The narratee can have various roles within the text. Genette in Nouveau discours du récit distinguishes between an intradiegetic narratee and an extradiegetic narratee. The intradiegetic narratee, like M. de Renoncour in Manon Lescaut, who is an actual character in the text, while the extradiegetic narratee, like the narratee of Père Goriot, can be totally confused with the implied reader.⁴⁷ Since the narratee in the Roman bourgeois is a presence within the discourse itself, as a motivated and curious aristocratic reader of literature, he might function as Genette's intradiegetic narratee because for Genette the intradiegetic narratee acts as a relay between the narrator and the implied reader (lecteur virtuel). Although the narratee is aristocratic and "familiar" with classical as well as contemporary works of literature, he remains a naive and literal reader who is completely powerless to resist the narrator's manipulative and subversive ploys.

Genette equates the implied reader with an extradiegetic narratee, that is to say, the narratee who is "outside" of the narrator's discourse, separate from the inscribed "you" of the text.⁴⁸ A further distinction between the narratee and the implied reader is made by W. Daniel Wilson:

More often the indirectly portrayed characterized reader (the narratee) will correspond to the implied reader. The implied reader, in turn, can be defined as the attitudes and judgments demanded of the real reader by the text. The implied reader cannot be deduced from specific textual references, whether direct or indirect, to a reader, unless the implied reader is identical to a characterized reader.⁴⁹

The Roman bourgeois does not seem to follow this model because the implied reader, the one who coincides with the competent reader, is in a position to judge the text and discern the overt contradictions and subversions present. Because of his knowledge of mythology, the Bible, almanacs, and heroic and comic novels which are incorporated into the text, his referential system is vaster than that of the Wilson's indirectly portrayed characterized reader. This situation results in his being able to verify the narrator's claims as they pertain to these other works. Besides not being the inscribed receiver of the text, a major factor which distinguishes the implied reader from the narratee is that the implied reader's status as a competent reader is

not made an issue. This corresponds to Wilson's statement that the implied reader is by definition always a positively intended model.⁵⁰

By contrast the narratee's competency as a reader is constantly questioned by the narrator. Throughout the text the narrator plays with the narratee by continuously allying himself with and distancing himself from him; just as community is made it is broken. For example, immediately after establishing the narratee as possessing a certain degree of familiarity with literary tradition ("Un plus grand orateur ou poète que moi. . .ne vous pourrait rien faire lire que vous n'eussiez vu cent fois.") the narrator claims to break with that very tradition: "N'attendez pas pourtant que je vous la décrive ici, comme on a coutume de faire en ces occasions. . ."(p.33) In proposing a new style of writing the narrator opposes convention to innovation as he reduces the narratee's knowledge to a secondary position, thereby devalorizing it. The narrator's strategy recalls Chambers' notion of "derived authority" as the narrator manipulates intertextual references. The narratee's very knowledge is ridiculed as it results from reading literature which uses the same devices over and over again: "Un plus grand orateur ou poète que moi, quelque inventif qu'il fût, ne vous pourrait rien faire lire que vous n'eussiez vu cent fois."(p.157) By not following the conventions of the novel

and, especially, by underscoring those points where the novel differs from traditional novels, the narrator appears to make the narratee re-evaluate his perception of what constitutes the novel. The narrator anticipates a negative reaction from the narratee where the text does not follow literary tradition and opposes established norms. For example, the narrator anticipates criticism when in his novel a marriage is about to take place much earlier than is traditionally the custom in other novels:

Je me doute bien qu'il n'y aura pas un lecteur (tant soit-il bénévole) qui ne dise ici en lui-même: 'Voici un méchant Romantiste! Cette histoire n'est pas fort longue ni fort intriguée. Comment! il conclut d'abord un mariage, et on n'a coutume de les faire qu'à la fin du dixième tome!' (p.44)

The narratee is seen as a reader of worn out imitations which have formed his foundation of critical analysis. This foundation is shown to have come from an acceptance of the repetition of the same norms.

The narrator becomes flippant under the anticipated negative judgement by the narratee. He takes control and shows himself to have a commanding knowledge of other works:

Que si vous êtes si désireux de voir comme on découvre sa passion, je vous en indiquerai plusieurs moyens qui sont dans l'Amadis, dans l'Astrée, dans Cyrus et dans tous les autres roman, que je n'ai pas le loisir ni le dessein de

copier ni de dérober, comme ont fait la plupart des auteurs, qui se sont servis des inventions de ceux qui avaient écrit auparavant eux. (p.66)

He again shows his doubt of the narratee's ability to retain information:

C'est la marque la plus ordinaire à quoi on connaît dans Paris les gens de qualité, bien que cette marque soit fort trompeuse. Il avait vu Lucrece dans cette église (j'ai failli à dire: que j'ai déjà décrite), où il était allé le jour de cette solennité dont j'ai parlé. . . .(p.51)
(emphasis mine)

He becomes practically insulting: ". . .vous n'êtes guère versés dans la lecture des romans, ou vous devez savoir 20 ou 30 de ces entretiens par coeur, pour peu que vous ayez de mémoire."(p.156) In systematically subverting the notion of reader competence on the part of the narratee, the narrator takes on more and more authority through making the narratee's knowledge of other texts work against itself ultimately negating the presumed knowledge. This in turn devalorizes the role of intertextual allusions in the Roman bourgeois as they are given credence only when incorporated in the discourse of the narrator himself. In this position of authority, the narrator can then enlighten, or re-educate, the narratee:

Mais il (le lecteur) me pardonnera, s'il lui plaît, si j'abrège et si je cours en poste à la conclusion. Il me doit même avoir beaucoup

d'obligation de ce que je le guéris de cette impatience qu'ont beaucoup de lecteurs de voir durer si longtemps une histoire amoureuse, sans pouvoir deviner quelle en sera la fin. (p.44)

The narrator distances himself from all previous works positing himself as the voice of the "real" as opposed to the "false," evident in the narrator's description of how the Marquis is tricking Lucrece into thinking that he plans to marry her:

Il n'y eut point de portrait, ni de montre, ni de bracelet de cheveux qui fût pris ou égaré, ou qui eût passé en d'autres mains, point d'absence ni de fausse nouvelle de mort ou de changement d'amour, point de rivale jalouse qui fût faire quelque fausse vision ou équivoque, qui sont toutes les choses nécessaires et les matériaux les plus communs pour bâtir des intrigues de romans, inventions qu'on a mises en tant de formes. . . . (p.69)

The narrator is then claiming that he is not inventing a story but telling the "truth" about the Marquis' "lie."

This claim is however subverted by the narrator's own words of caution:

O! que les pauvres lecteurs sont trompés quand ils lisent un poète de bonne foi, et qu'ils prennent les vers au pied de la lettre! Ils se forment de belles idées de personnes qui sont chimeriques, ou qui ne ressemblent en aucune façon à l'original. (p.126)

The narrator raises the intradiegetic reader's awareness to the fact that in literature all referents are fictive as he alerts him to the hazards of believing that the referent of fiction is real and operative.⁵¹ This calls the narrator's own role into question. The Marquis' deception in first promising to marry Lucrece and then abandoning her when it becomes inconvenient can be read as an example of the problem of representation in the novel, as it emphasizes the gaps separating Truth and Lies, Reality and Fiction, and Narrator and Narratee:

. . .quand je vous aurais dit qu'elle était de la riche taille, qu'elle avait les yeux bleus et bien fendus, les cheveux blonds et bien frisés, et plusieurs autres particularités de sa personne, vous ne la reconnaîtriez pas pour cela, et ce ne serait pas à dire qu'elle fût entièrement belle; car elle pourrait avoir des taches de rousseur, ou des marques de petite vérole. Témoin plusieurs héros et héroïnes, qui sont beaux et blancs en papier et sous le masque de roman, qui sont bien laids et bien basanés en chair et en os et à découvert. (p.33)

Because Javotte's reading of L'Astrée results in her life being totally changed as she patterns her own life on the characters in the novel, the problem of a "true" and "false" referent in fiction is called into question:

Il arrive la même chose pour la lecture: si elle a été interdite à une fille curieuse, elle s'y jettera à corps perdu, et sera d'autant plus en danger que, prenant les livres sans choix et sans

discretion, elle en pourra trouver quelqu'un qui d'abord lui corrompra l'esprit. Tel entre ceux-là est l'Astrée: plus il exprime naturellement les passions amoureuses, et mieux elles s'insinuent dans les jeunes âmes, où il se glisse un venin imperceptible, qui a gagné le coeur avant qu'on puisse avoir pris du contrepoison. (p.144)

The narrator's opinion of L'Astrée is that "il exprime naturellement les passions amoureuses." According to the narrator, the closer to "nature" a literary work appears, the more it is admired. By these standards, L'Astrée is considered in the Roman bourgeois as a work which has succeeded in the representation of nature. The work is then seen as powerful due to its successful representation of amorous passions whereby "il se glisse un venin imperceptible. . . ." Thus, passions represented in L'Astrée are seen as so natural to the "flesh and blood" reader that they become part of the reader's reality, and therefore are no longer "fiction."⁵² The unaware (i.e. naive) reader here is not only Javotte but is generalized to include "les jeunes âmes," as Javotte's reading is presented as typical of a group. For this group then literary passion becomes their own passion, with "fiction" becoming "reality," as well as influencing reality. This premise stands to contradict the narrator's previous insistence on the fundamental differences separating "fiction" and "reality." The narrator continues to subvert his own process through the dialectical opposition of his own statements.

Thus, the Roman bourgeois presents itself as a commentary on the representation of "truth" in fiction, all the while being itself a work of fiction. The commentary is therefore made on fiction through fiction itself. In this way, the Roman bourgeois operates as metafiction as its subject is ultimately reduced to the fiction-making process itself, as the contradictions and subversive acts on the part of the narrator themselves subvert other interpretations.

If this work is then viewed primarily as a commentary on literature, the implied (i.e. competent) reader could then be viewed as a literary critic, as he is in a position to judge the narrative as well as the narrator's assessment and manipulation of intertextual references and the anticipated performance of the narratee. The performance of the narratee seems to be a central element regarding the relationship of the implied reader and the narratee. Their roles sometimes overlap through, for example, a shared familiarity with other novels, the fact of being motivated and curious readers, and membership in the aristocracy. However, association with the narratee ends where the narratee is presented as not being a competent reader; when for example the narrator criticizes him for being a naive reader of worthless imitations, for having lapses of memory, and for needing to be re-educated as a reader. The implied

reader shifts from associating with the narratee to not associating with him, as the narrator's attitude changes. Michele Vialet comments on this problem as follows: "Le Roman bourgeois place le lecteur dans une position logiquement intenable qui rappelle les situations dans lesquelles se trouvent les personnes qui reçoivent des injonctions paradoxales. . . ."53 The identity and function of the implied reader is thus schizophrenic as the fragmentation of the narrator's voice, through its conflicting statements and premises, has an equivalent in the fragmentation of the implied reader who does not know from one moment to the next if he should associate himself with the inscribed "you" of the text.

In extending this analysis to the "real" flesh and blood reader/critic Linda Hutcheon's observation on the dual nature of the reader of metafiction becomes pertinent, since the reader on one hand lives in a world which he is forced to acknowledge as fictional and on the other must participate in it, engaging himself intellectually, imaginatively, and affectively in its co-creation.⁵⁴ Jean Alter echoes these sentiments regarding the Roman bourgeois:

On a vu que les lectures des romans scriptibles, aussi créatrices qu'elles soient, étaient dirigées par les obscurités ou les audaces du texte. Rien de pareil pour le Roman bourgeois. Précisément parce que, dans l'ensemble, il ne suscite pas d'interrogation à la lecture, il se prête, à la

relecture, à toutes les interprétations possibles,
à une véritablement libre invention. 55

Since the text resists closure at every turn as it parallels the fiction-making process itself, it remains for the reader/critic to make a coherent text from the contradictions and subversions of the novel.

The identification and function of the narratee in the Roman bourgeois can be summarized as follows: the narratee's knowledge of language and grammar is established; in the end, his ability to reason seems limited, as he remains fundamentally a naive reader; he not only follows this text from first page to last, but since he appears as a reader-type of seventeenth-century novels, he would have read all previous texts in the same manner; and although he possesses certain characteristics, he does not have a "personality" as such, but is defined more through his function in the novel, as receiver, within the text. Although defined as a reader-type of the seventeenth century he should not be confused with the implied reader who through his knowledge of other texts is in a position to question and evaluate the narrator's subversive stance. In the same way that the narrator turns the narratee's knowledge against the narratee himself, the implied reader has similar power to judge the narrator's knowledge of these other works. It remains true however that the narrator's is

the sole voice of the text in spite of his dialectic stance throughout the novel.

Chapter 5

The Bourgeoisie: Identity and Function

The Roman bourgeois is said to be the first novel which aims, as its primary goal, to present the lives and adventures of the bourgeoisie, as the narrator states: "Je chante les amours et les aventures de plusieurs bourgeois de Paris. . . ." (p.29) One must ask if the narrator is to be taken at his word. Given what we know about the narrator and his problematizing of storytelling, this claim becomes suspect. What then is the function of the concept of the bourgeoisie?

As metafiction, this novel aims at the creation of an illusion: a picture of bourgeois life as well as its subversion. The subversion process becomes a statement on the creation of that illusion, which in this case would be the bourgeoisie, as an objectively existing world which can be commonly experienced through a linguistic construct. If the emphasis is on fictionality, on the illusion, then maybe the end product is nothing but fiction, a construction of words. In its parodic dimension the Roman bourgeois exposes the shortcomings of worn-out literary conventions (elaborate descriptions, character-types, etc.). In doing so the Roman bourgeois undermines the authority of any text to paint a picture of "true" objective reality. The polarity between

"form" (parodic intertextuality) and "content" (true-to-life bourgeoisie) is a continuous reminder of the fictionality of the picture painted. Through drawing attention to, thereby emphasizing, the fiction-making process, the illusion created, i.e. the reality of the bourgeoisie, is seen as a purely fictional or linguistic construct.

This is evident from the oxymoron of the title roman bourgeois, where roman is devalorized by its juxtaposition to bourgeois since roman belongs to heroic and noble literary tradition. The effect of bourgeois in the title serves on the one hand to destabilize the roman as this qualifier is completely alien to what constitutes a roman. On the other hand, it underscores the fact that bourgeois, like roman, is a fictional construct. The shock value of juxtaposing these two terms underscores the playfulness of language. The arbitrariness of language itself is reflected in the title, and will be further explored in this chapter as arbitrariness can be seen to operate in the social and legal systems within the novel as the embedded figure of the arbitrariness of all texts. We may be reminded here that all language as such is arbitrary.⁵⁶

The concern with language appears inherent in the conceptualization of metafiction. Implicit in metafiction's concern with the fiction-making process is a concern for the "language," "words," and "signifier/signified." For just as

the novel opposes narration to reality and form to content, it also opposes sign and meaning, that is it frees the signifier from the signified. One way in which this is exemplified is through the treatment of social codes that act as figures embedded in the text and therefore can be considered as a metaphor for the primacy of the signifier in the novel.

Just as the manner in which the narrator emphasizes his presence and function in the Roman bourgeois makes the narrative self-referential or reflexive, the historical situation in the novel (i.e. the condition of the bourgeoisie in seventeenth-century France) makes the narrative, to use Chambers' term, "situationally self-referential."⁵⁷ For Chambers it would not suffice to, for example, analyze the bourgeoisie as a textual construct or the novel as fiction while not exploring the historical situation within the narrative. This problem is explored in Story and Situation, where he attempts to incorporate a contextual framework with the study of the narrative: "With the waning of structuralism, it has become clear that, in general terms, meaning is not inherent in discourse and its structures, but contextual, a function of the pragmatic situation in which the discourse occurs."⁵⁸ He takes Seymour Chatman to task for having focused his analysis in Story and

Discourse on the internal relationships of the narrative alone:

My critique of the narratological tradition conveniently encapsulated by Seymour Chatman is not, then, that this tradition fails to explore the pragmatics of literary narrative in the sense of the empirical circumstances in which literary texts come to be written and read. It is rather that, in concerning itself with literary texts, it has neglected those features in them -- those textual indices of contractual and transactional understanding -- that themselves realize the narratives as verbal structures, onto a world of events and change. Not the actual historicity of texts, but the markers, within them, of the historical situation -- these are what a renewed narratology . . . might take as its object.⁵⁹

Thus the text presents empirical circumstances, born from the historicity of the text, which are revealed within the text as "historical markers."

A cornerstone of Chambers' theory is that along with being narratively self-referential, a text can be situationally self-referential:

In short, the self-reflexivity of literary texts is part of an apparatus whereby they can ensure that they are read as literary and thus make their claim to an interpretative history. . . . I am saying that certain texts are, in a specific way, situationally self-referential and that these texts have recourse to a form of self-referentiality that analyzes them in their communicational function and actualizes them as communicational acts, specifying the conditions -- the necessary understandings between reader and text -- for them to be successful as acts of literary communication.⁶⁰

Within the context of a self-situating narrative, the bourgeoisie in the Roman bourgeois then might be understood as representing a class consciousness within the novel. As such, it is understood as "figurally embedded" in the narrative: "'Figural' embedding . . . consists of the incorporation into the narrative of a 'figure' (in the sense of a personage but also in the sense of an image) that is representative in some sense of "art," or of the production and reception of narrative. . . ."61 Bourgeois then can be understood, from the title and opening passage of the novel, as a figure which is alien to its own function, for how can a "novel" be "bourgeois"? How can the narrator claim to follow the tradition of Virgil while claiming to sing of the bourgeoisie? It then is only through reading the Roman bourgeois that these questions might be answered. From the very outset it is evident that the novel posits itself as being like other novels, as it calls itself roman, yet different and original, as it calls itself bourgeois.

The description of the bourgeoisie serves the author/narrator's stated purpose of claiming to be the voice of moral instruction. The author/libraire in the first preface expresses the hope that the novel, by being different and original, will "open the reader's eyes":

Comme il y a des médecins qui purgent avec des potions agréables, il y a aussi des livres plaisants qui donnent des avertissements fort utiles. On sait combien la morale dogmatique est infructueuse; on a beau prêcher les bonnes maximes, on les suit encore avec plus de peine qu'on ne les écoute. Mais quand nous voyons le vice tourné en ridicule, nous nous en corrigeons, de peur d'être les objets de la risée publique. (p.23)

This passage functions as a marker of the contract between the author/narrator and the reader. It appears then that the author/libraire's wish is that by reading the novel, the reader will correct his own faults by associating them with the flaws of his characters. The author/libraire does not want to use maxims or morals, preferring rather to imitate their corrective function by showing them "in action" in the novel. Thus, for the text to fulfill its stated premise the reader of the novel must view the characters as representing "le vice tourné en ridicule" which should lead the reader to correct these same faults in himself.⁶²

In the narrative it is the role of the narrator to label or qualify elements of the narrative, since his is the voice of authority (albeit at times ambiguous) in the text. Thus he has the power to label characters, places, and events as "ridiculous" or "bourgeois". The narrator's identity appears firmly rooted in the aristocracy, an identification which he extends to the narratee as well: "C'est ainsi qu'il appelait en sa langue celui que nous

dirions en la nôtre qui est fort attaché au Palais, et qui ne se plaît qu'à voir des papiers."(p.43) (emphasis mine) It is evident that there is a clear line of demarcation between the narrator/narratee and the bourgeoisie. Therefore, anything referred to as bourgeois would automatically emphasize the distance between the narrator/narratee and the object, character, or action being described.

The narrator begins his description of the bourgeoisie at the Place Maubert because it is most representative of the bourgeois milieu:

. . .je veux que la scène de mon roman soit mobile, c'est-à-dire tantôt en un quartier et tantôt en un autre de la ville; et je commencerai par celui qui est le plus bourgeois, qu'on appelle communément la place Maubert. . . Un autre auteur moins sincère, et qui voudrait paraître éloquent, ne manquerait jamais de faire ici une description magnifique de cette place. Il commencerait son éloge, par l'origine de son nom; il dirait qu'elle a été anoblie par ce fameux docteur Albert le Grand. . .Après cela il la bâtirait superbement selon la dépense qu'y voudrait faire son imagination. (p.30)

Thus, the description is not of the "real" Place Maubert in central Paris but rather a "fictional" construct consciously created by the narrator, an opposition which goes back to the title. The Place Maubert is not important to the action in the novel. Instead, its significance is primarily to situate the bourgeoisie referentially in time and place, thus evoking Chambers' historicity.

However, these two concepts of time and place are the very concepts which the novel itself presents as problematic, as "physical" reality is shown to be independent of "fictional" reality. The "real" Place Maubert is not described in the text. The narrator plays upon the gap, making the description a non-description as he describes what a "less sincere" author might have written: "Un auteur moins sincère, et qui voudrait paraître éloquent, ne manquerait jamais de faire ici une description magnifique de cette place." The narrator presents this as if it were an intertextual reference. This conscious effort of the narrator to distance this description from three-dimensional reality plays upon the dual nature of a description as a literary convention: It is fiction, yet purports to represent that which is "real" (i.e. not fiction). Barthes explores this duality in "L'Effet du réel," questioning how a description can create an illusion of reality:

La description apparaît ainsi comme une sorte de "propre" des langages dits supérieurs, dans la mesure, apparemment paradoxale, où elle n'est justifiée par aucune finalité d'action ou de communication. La singularité de la description (ou du "détail inutile") dans le tissu narratif, sa solitude, désigne une question qui a la plus grande importance pour l'analyse structurale des récits. Cette question est la suivante: tout, dans le récit, est-il signifiant, et sinon, s'il subsiste dans le syntagme narratif quelques plages insignifiantes, quelle est en définitive, si l'on peut dire, la signification de cette insignifiance? 63

One significance of this insignificance in the Roman bourgeois can be found if the novel is viewed as situationally self-referential. By making the description of the Place Maubert a non-description the narrator emphasizes the gap between physical reality and fictional reality, while at the same time underscoring that the Place Maubert as well as all other events, characters, actions, etc. within the novel are purely fictional constructs. This serves to emphasize, as metafiction does, the essentially fictional universe which the text represents. Thus, the novel is in effect being "staged" by the narrator who later in the novel claims to want to "faire jouer cette pièce sans pompe et sans appareil, comme ces comédies qui se jouent chez le bourgeois avec un simple paravent." (p.31) As in metafiction, the focus rests on representing a representation ("ces comedies"), thus creating a mise en abyme of narrational act within narrational act, as the narrator claims to be representing a comedy.

What does it mean to be a bourgeois character in this novel? Virtually all bourgeois characters are affiliated with the legal profession. As we have already seen, the narrator situates the bourgeoisie as "object" through the bourgeois' difference and distance from himself. As such this class is seen as inferior in status to the narrator.

Vollichon is hideous, totally lacking in refinement or noble traits:

C'était un petit homme trapu grisonnant, et qui était de même âge que sa calotte. Il avait vieilli avec elle sous un bonnet gras et enforcé qui avait plus couvert de méchancetés qu'il n'en aurait pu tenir dans cent autres têtes et sous cent autres bonnets: car la chicane s'était emparée du corps de ce petit homme, de la manière que le démon se saisit du corps d'un possédé. (p.40)

His physical ugliness is mirrored by his moral standards: "Il avait une antipathie naturelle contre la vérité. . . ." (p.41) Thus in this description of Vollichon, the notion of "chicane" is equated with avarice and corruption.

It would at first appear that a function of the bourgeoisie might be to enhance, through opposition, the qualities of the aristocracy. These flaws in character are scorned by the narrator as well as by the nobility:

. . . il (Vollichon) n'avait pas manqué de devenir riche, et en même temps d'être tout à fait décrié: ce qui avait fait dire à un galant homme, fort à propos, en parlant de ce chicaneur, que c'était un homme dont tout le bien était mal acquis, à la réserve de sa réputation." (p.41)

The reputation is revealed by the collective opinion of the aristocracy (as alluded to by the reference of "galant homme") vis-à-vis Vollichon. This situates the aristocracy

in opposition to Vollichon; therefore if Vollichon is avaricious and corrupt then this would make the aristocracy through binary opposition implicitly generous and honest.

Another bourgeois-type is Bedout, who is totally devoid of personality and moral fiber: "Il était fils d'un marchand bonnetier qui était devenu fort riche à force d'épargner sa barbe. Il se nommait Jean Bedout, gros et trapu, un peu camus, et fort large des épaules." (p.85) "Il avait pourtant quelques bonnes qualités: car la chasteté et la sobriété étaient en lui en un souverain degré, et généralement toutes les vertus épargnantes." (p.86) This awkward character, educated in avarice, continues in the tradition of his father. Avarice with Bedout is just as negative an attribute as it is with Vollichon, as both are obsessed with acquiring and holding on to wealth at whatever cost. Even the virtues of chastity and sobriety, normally positive attributes, are negated since they serve his avarice. Bedout enjoys social prominence due to his wealth, as is evidenced by his being chosen by Vollichon as the best suitor for Javotte and, eventually, as the best husband for Lucrèce.

When a character in the Roman bourgeois is not obsessed with money, he directs his efforts to transcending his social status by imitating the aristocracy. Such a character is Nicodème who attempts to shed his bourgeois status as he is "le matin avocat et le soir courtisan." (p.34)

C'était un de ces jeunes bourgeois qui, malgré leur naissance et leur éducation, veulent passer pour des gens du bel air, et qui croient, quand ils sont vêtus à la mode et qu'ils méprisent ou raillent leur parenté, qu'ils ont acquis un grand degré d'élévation au dessus de leurs semblables. .
 . . (pp.34-35)

This passage underscores a basic motive of bourgeois society in the Roman bourgeois: a desire to better its situation, and to acquire social prestige, thus achieving "un grand degré d'élévation au dessus de leurs semblables," and thus becoming more like the aristocracy.

Ironically as a fact of the book, the bourgeois characters' desire to acquire ever more social prominence and wealth serves at the same time to distance them from their past condition and experience. This is ironic because being bourgeois means trying to become an aristocrat. For the narrator, to rise above their situation requires that they try to break with their past, "qu'ils méprisent ou raillent leur parenté." Denying their origin ("leur naissance") or their social conditioning ("leur éducation"), they model their behavior after "des gens de bel air." They want to imitate these aristocrats "de bel air" by both appearing like the aristocrats and as well as different from the bourgeois. Thus within the social code, an ideal situation for a bourgeois would be to imitate the aristocracy effectively by, among other things, dressing "à

la mode," and scorning his past, thereby so completely linking appearance and essence that he could pass for a nobleman. The signifier, then, would determine the character's rank in society. We will see later that the aristocratic model in the novel (i.e. the Marquis) presents the same problem of appearances not coinciding with essence, as he possesses many of the same characteristics which have been associated with the bourgeoisie. Thus, the distance separating the bourgeoisie from the aristocracy is no longer absolute; in fact it is rendered progressively more unstable, as the bourgeoisie is seen as adapting itself to aristocratic standards.

One way in which this process of copying the aristocracy occurs is for the bourgeoisie to value and consequently identify with signifiers, especially those which become signifiers for wealth and social prominence. A situation lamented by the narrator: "On n'examine point son mérite; on en juge seulement par l'extérieur. . . ." (p.55) For example, the Marquis is not recognized as an aristocrat in Lucrèce's home because his clothes are dirty; Vollichon does not trust Nicodème as a future son-in-law because he appears too handsome, since to be too handsome means to be "trop coquet"; Nicodème is judged to be the father of Lucrèce's baby because he pays her a large sum of money; and in the case of Javotte physical beauty is overemphasized.

The same prejudices attributed to the bourgeoisie are present in earlier works, such as Francion, as Francion himself complains:

Je sentis vivement en ce temps-là les poignantes
 espines de mon malheur, car n'estant couvert que
 de mon pauvre habit, personne ne faisoit estime de
 moy, et je n'osois porter une epée en cet estat,
 parce qu'au lieu de servir de témoignage de ma
 noblesse, elle m'eust fait prendre pour un
 fainéant vagabond, par le plus sot peuple de
 toutes les villes de la terre. 64

The following description of the manner in which Nicodème imitates the aristocracy is important because it focuses on the quality of the imitation as well as of that which is imitated:

Mais j'ai eu tort de dire qu'il (Nicodème) n'était pas reconnaissable: sa mine, son geste, sa contenance et son entretien le faisaient assez connaître, car il est bien plus difficile d'en changer que de vêtement, et toutes les grimaces et affectations faisaient voir qu'il n'imitait les gens de cour qu'en ce qu'ils avaient de défectueux et de ridicule. (p.35) (emphasis mine)

This passage presents an element which is fundamental in understanding how the bourgeoisie operates in the novel: That it is motivated essentially by the desire to be as much like the aristocracy as possible. Thus the bourgeoisie is in a continuous state of "becoming": Of becoming more like the prestigious aristocracy and progressively distanced from the

perceived mediocracy of the bourgeoisie. Their ideology can be understood as a valorization of the external trappings of wealth and power on the one hand, and on the other, as disregarding that which is not in accord with aristocratic standards.

It appears as if the characters are assuming roles which they recognize as fiction. Their identity depends upon representing the aristocratic social code. Catherine Belsey's definition of ideology appears pertinent to this novel because it posits ideology in both a real and imaginary relation to the world, "real in that it is the way in which people really live their relationship to the social relations which govern their conditions of existence, but imaginary in that it discourages a full understanding of these conditions of existence and the ways in which people are socially constituted within them."⁶⁵ Basically the bourgeois social structure is patterned after the perceived aristocratic one, which explains the bourgeoisie's emphasis on social prominence (Nicodème) and on wealth (Vollichon and Bedout). Yet, they can only imitate the outer or physical manifestations of nobility. For some critics, such as Harriet Stone, this has been interpreted as a "failed imitation" on the part of the bourgeoisie:

Thus the bourgeois' imitation of the aristocracy affords neither grace nor elegance. It lacks

the original character of both origins (originel) and innovations (original). As a sign, the bourgeoisie is collapsed rather than completed by the production of the signifiers, in keeping with the narrator's conviction that the aristocratic ideal is destroyed through the commercial enterprise, this bourgeois production.⁶⁶

Although I would agree with Stone that it is a question of a "failed imitation" of the nobility by the bourgeoisie, I would add that it is also a question of an "imitation of failure" since the bourgeoisie is incapable of imitating that which is valid and noble in the aristocracy and can only imitate their failings, "ce qu'ils avaient de défectueux et de ridicule." This implies the impossibility of ascending to the rank of a "higher" social class. The bourgeoisie has a limited concept of what being an aristocrat entails, thus it relies on acceptance of signifiers as equaling standards.

How is the aristocracy presented in the text? Can one even speak of a "higher" class in the novel? The Marquis is the only aristocratic character to enjoy a primary role in Book One of the novel. He is presented as: ". . .un gentilhomme des mieux faits en France et un des plus spirituels." (p.66) His title, however, reflects more his wealth than his birthright:

Mais c'est peu de dire marquis, si on n'ajoute de quarante, de cinquante ou soixante mille livres de rente: car il y en a tant d'inconnus et de la

nouvelle fabrique, qu'on n'en fera plus de cas, s'ils ne font porter à leur marquisat le nom de leur revenu, comme fit autrefois celui qui se faisait nommer seigneur de dix-sept cent mille écus. (p.51)

The Marquis is flaunting his wealth since money is considered very important by the aristocracy. There are so many marquis that the aristocracy reverts to what we have established as a bourgeois practice, that of classifying an individual according to the amount of wealth he possesses. Thus, with the novel presenting evidence of what the two classes have in common, the aristocracy is seen as essentially not unlike the bourgeoisie. Thus the distance separating them dissolves further.

The question of the Marquis' function as a "nobleman" appears ambivalent. On one hand, he can be viewed as marking the superior position of the aristocracy in the novel. Being an aristocrat the Marquis easily woos Lucrèce who could profit much from such a union. In the eyes of her other suitors he is also viewed as privileged:

. . .mais c'était toujours avec quelque espèce de respect pour le marquis, et sous son bon plaisir. Ils prenaient leur avantage quand il n'y était pas et ils lui cédaient la place quand il arrivait; car chacun sait que ces nobles sont un peu redoutables aux bourgeois, et par conséquent nuisent beaucoup aux filles, à cause qu'ils écartent les bons partis. (p.70)

Although his position as a nobleman does not necessarily exempt him from ridicule, it remains true that the bourgeois automatically bows to the exigencies of the Marquis.

On the other hand however, the Marquis demonstrates the same concern for appearances as the bourgeoisie: ". . . (le marquis) faisait grande dépense et changeait tous les jours d'habits, de plumes et de garnitures. C'est la marque la plus ordinaire à quoi on connaît dans Paris les gens de qualité, bien que cette marque soit fort trompeuse." (p.51) In his conversations with Lucrece's friends and family the Marquis scorns the idea that exterior appearances reflect the worth of a man: ". . . en la plupart des compagnies on n'estime point un homme. . . . On n'examine point son mérite; on en juge seulement par l'extérieur. . . ." (p.55) However he adds later: "Mais il faut avoir quelque indulgence pour les personnes de mérite qui, étant le plus souvent occupées à des choses plus agréables, n'ont ni le loisir ni le moyen de songer à se parer." (p.58) The Marquis ends by apologizing for his pompous dress:

Je vous avoue (dit le marquis) que ma condition m'oblige à faire dépense en habits, parce que le goût du siècle le veut ainsi; et pour ne pas avoir la tache d'avarice ou de rusticité, je suis les modes et j'en invente quelquefois: mais c'est contre mon inclination, et je voudrais qu'il me fût permis de convertir ces folles dépenses en de

pures libéralités envers d'honnêtes hommes qui en ont besoin. (p.60)

The concern with appearances and the outward demonstration of wealth, mirrors to some degree the concerns of Vollichon, Bedout and Nicodème. This problematizes the concept of what is "bourgeois" in the novel since from the outset, the qualifier "bourgeois" relegated a character to an inferior position in the novel, as he is seen to possess negative attributes; thus he is distanced from the (implied) aristocratic model. However, when it comes to having an aristocrat in the text who can be viewed as a model, he is presented as devoid of any trace of noble or positive attributes. As situationally self-referential, the novel paints a social system whose seeded power base resides with a class that is not inherently more deserving of it than another would be. The questioning of what constitutes established hierarchy can be seen as operating in works of metafiction as well, as they devalorize the representation of physical reality in fiction while they instead valorize the representation of fiction, deemed valid and truthful.

As the novel progresses, the Marquis shows himself to be self-serving and hypocritical. He seems to embody the idea that "clothes make the man," as the exterior trappings of his class in the form of wealth and social position do not represent the "interior" nobility of character, heart or

mind. He takes full advantage of his wealth and class, while he is motivated by lust, and seduces Lucrece. In fact he appears as one of the most subversive characters in the novel: first by seducing her with a marriage contract; then by giving her "le plus beau cabinet d'ébène" in which to store the contract, and keeping an extra key for himself; and finally stealing the contract and leaving her pregnant. These actions reflect a more general attitude of the nobility toward the bourgeoisie: "D'ailleurs, les gens de cour. . .prennent des avantages sur une bourgeoise coquette qu'ils n'oseraient pas prendre sur une personne de condition, dont ils respecteraient la qualité."(p.68)

The Marquis' manner of seducing this "lowly" bourgeois girl seems based on simple economics as he attempts to gain her favor by buying it:

Et qu'y a-t-il dont ne se dispense un gentilhomme quand il est question de se déshonorer par une indigne alliance? Il avait commencé d'acquiescer l'estime de Lucrece en faisant grande dépense pour elle; il lui laissa même gagner quelque argent, en faisant voir néanmoins qu'il ne perdait pas par sottise, ni faute de savoir le jeu. (p.67)

It seems then that instead of an affair of the heart, Marquis is involved more in a game of conquest, in which the victim's favor can be bought.

Once he has enjoyed Lucrece, he decides to terminate the relationship:

La passion du marquis étant un peu refroidie par la jouissance, il fit réflexion sur la sottise qu'il allait faire s'il exécutait la parole qu'il avait donnée à Lucrèce. Outre le tort qu'il faisait à sa maison en se mésalliant, il voyait tous ses parents animés contre lui, qui lui feraient perdre les grands biens sans lesquels il ne pouvait soutenir l'éclat de sa naissance. Il voyait, d'un autre côté, que, si Lucrèce plaidait contre lui en vertu de sa promesse de mariage, cela lui ferait une très fâcheuse affaire: car, outre que ces sortes de procès laissent toujours quelque tache à l'honneur d'un honnête homme, à cause qu'il est accusé en public de trahison et de manquement de parole, les événements en sont quelquefois douteux, et avec quelque avantage qu'on en sorte, ils coûtent toujours très cher. (p.75)

The flame of his love dies quickly after seducing her, as he realizes that the cost of keeping her is too high. The speed with which the Marquis falls out of love with Lucrèce equals the speed with which Nicodème loses interest in Javotte once their engagement is officially terminated: ". . .son amour. . . s'évanouit peu de temps après, car l'amour n'est pas opiniâtre dans une tête bourgeoise comme il l'est dans un coeur héroïque; l'attachement et la rupture se font communément et avec une grande facilité. . . ." (p.147) Thus, the class distinction between the Marquis and Nicodème disappears in this instance, as neither seems capable of a truly noble love. A "coeur héroïque" is conspicuously absent in the novel.

In spite of the Marquis' function as a "mark", situating the place and function of the aristocracy in bourgeois society, he appears to function according to the fundamentals of the bourgeois social code through his concern with signifiers, his class consciousness, his general dishonesty, his breach of the marriage contract and his overriding concern for economic security. The Marquis can be viewed ironically as a model upon which the bourgeois social code relies, as it "n'imitait les gens de cour qu'en ce qu'ils avait de défectueux et de ridicule." (p.35)

By the end of Book One it becomes evident that the bourgeois are indeed capable of modeling themselves after the aristocracy, as the aristocracy possesses the same negative characteristics as the bourgeoisie. Through the course of Book One the distance separating the aristocracy from the bourgeoisie is effectively eliminated. Both classes are motivated by an overriding concern for appearances. Appearances in and of themselves represent standards in society, and therefore illustrate the notion of the primacy of the signifier.

In Book Two, the lawyer Belastre represents the collapsing of the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie: "Et pour vous faire connaître sa capacité, sachez qu'il était né en Perigord, cadet d'une maison qui était noble, à ce qu'il disait. . . ." (p.192) So, what we have is someone who claims

to be an aristocrat. By the second book, the distance separating the aristocrat from the bourgeois is nonexistent. This aspect is mirrored by Belastre who acts as a paradigm for the relationship between the bourgeoisie and the aristocracy since he is aristocratic yet acts as a bourgeois by his blundering and ridiculous actions. He functions then as a dual model for both the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie. Belastre is a notable example of how the relationship of the signifier to the signified is problematized: Should Belastre's claim that he is an aristocrat be believed or does his "bourgeois" appearance and profession make him a bourgeois? There is no way for the reader to decide.

The primacy of the signifier is emphasized elsewhere in Book Two of the novel, which focuses primarily on the workings of the legal system. It is a question of a legal system obsessed with manipulating rhetoric; the law is a pretext for rhetorical games and pleading cases. Collantine, truly a genius at rhetorical play, shows herself to be as talented as Vollichon in manipulating this system, since both are driven by what the narrator refers to as a demonic desire to manipulate language for the sake of personal gain. Collantine declares: ". . .le seul moyen de me plaire est de se défendre contre moi jusqu'à l'extrémité."(p.206) Her

obsession for rhetorical play overshadows legal judgements and rulings:

(Collantine) poussa son affaire et la patience de son auditeur à bout, et négligea même à la fin d'écouter l'avis qu'elle lui avait demandé, pour se servir de la même fleur de rhétorique dont elle s'était servie l'autre fois, et passer, sans être interrompue, au récit d'une autre affaire. (pp.175-176)

Rhetorical arguments are also central to the relationship of Collantine, author of court cases, and Charroselles, literary author, since the relationship appears motivated by the two characters' desire to have an audience to act as receiver of their texts:

Lors de sa première visite, et immédiatement après le premier compliment, Charroselles la voulut régaler de son bel esprit, et lui montrer le catalogue de ses ouvrages. Mais Collantine l'interrompit, et lui fit voir auparavant toutes les étiquettes de ses procès."(p.182)

This desire to dominate through language bonds Collantine and Charroselles, as each one wants to reduce the other to silence. This is, however, an interminable process: "Il en est de même des procès de Collantine et de Charroselles: ils ont toujours plaidé et plaident encore, et plaideront tant qu'il plaira à Dieu de les laisser vivre."(p.255) In this last sentence of the Roman bourgeois we find that these two characters are locked in a constant struggle to gain an audience through a war of words where signifier is isolated

from signified, where meaning is irrelevant and rhetoric all-important.

Signifiers cut-off from the signified through the limitless play of rhetoric in the text leads to the subversion of the function of the signifier: The case of *Lucrèce's* two marriage contracts is a case in point. It illustrates the manner in which multiple texts subvert the function and significance of the individual texts themselves. From *Lucrèce's* point of view, the marriage contract offered her by the Marquis is a binding document. The other one that she solicited from *Nicodème* appears to be a whim, a joke. Yet, after the Marquis steals his contract from *Lucrèce*, she uses *Nicodème's* as a replacement in order to obtain a settlement, since she is pregnant. Therefore, an originally non-binding contract replaces the stolen, "binding" one. In the case of *Nicodème*, this contract plays a role in the dissolution of his marriage contract with *Javotte*, since he is seen as unworthy and dishonest. The significance of the marriage contract in the text changes as the contract, originally representing honorable intentions and a legal bonding of two individuals, ultimately serves as a vehicle to dishonor individuals and to terminate relationships.

The marriage contract acts then as a text which subverts, deconstructs and ultimately fragments other texts

(i.e. marriage contracts). Instead of the marriage contracts each serving to bond two individuals, the function of each contract ultimately serves to destabilize the other, as the signifier is separated from the signified. This process is again evident at the end of the Roman bourgeois with the "Catalogue es livres de Mythophilacte," which echoes many of the same concerns of the author in the preface and the narrator in the novel. This catalogue entails a listing and short description of the books belonging to the poverty-stricken, deceased poet Mythophilacte. This inventory has been scorned by critics who view it as fragmenting and disrupting the narrative.⁶⁷ Indeed the inventory itself consists of independent works which seem, a priori to have nothing more in common than being texts which share the same library, as the following titles indicate: "Apologie de Saluste du Bartas et d'autres poètes anciens qui ont essayé de mettre en vogue les mots composez"; "La Vis sans fin, ou le projet et dessein d'un roman universal"; "La Lardiure des courtisans, ou satyre contre plusieurs ridicules de la cour"; "Description merveilleuse d'un grand seigneur prophetisé par David"; etc. However, what these critics have not considered is how the inventory itself could serve as a model of the Roman bourgeois: independent, fragmented narrative elements assembled under a single title. The inventory thus appears as a mise en abyme of the

novel and, by extension, of the metafictional process as well.

The fragmentation and independence of narrative elements is underscored from the first entry of the inventory, "L'Amadisiade":

Poëme héroï-comique, contenant les dits, faits et prouesses d'Amadis de Gaule et autres nobles chevaliers; divisé en vingt-quatre volumes, et chaque volume en vingt-quatre chants, et chaque chant en vingt-quatre chapitres, et chaque chapitre en vingt-quatre chapitres, et chaque chapitre en vingt-dixains, oeuvre de 1724800 vers sans les argumens. (p.231)

The emphasis here is on the units which comprise the work and not on the characters or adventures in the text. The single text is ultimately fragmented to 1,724,800 verses, separate units joined into a single corpus through no other means than a shared title.

If the reader views the individual books found in the inventory as a single text, it could serve as a commentary on the literature of the period:

Apologie de Saluste du Bartas et d'autres poëtes anciens qui ont essayé de mettre en vogue les mots composez; où il est monsté que les François, en cette occasion, n'ont esté que des pagnottes en comparaison des Grecs et des Romains. . . (p.321)

Dictionnaire poétique, ou recueil succinct des mots et phrases propres a faire des vers, comme appas, attraits, charmes, flèches, flammes, beauté sans

pareil, merveille sans second, etc. Avec une préface où il est montré qu'il n'y a qu'environ une trentaine de mots en quoy consiste le levain poétique pour faire enfler les poèmes et les romans a l'infini. (p.233)

These two books play upon the idea that contemporary language and literature pale in comparison to those of the Ancients. The latter recalls the narrator's criticisms of the cliches found in contemporary literature, where the same words appear in the same formula for the same purpose, thus causing them to lose meaning as well as the value of the text to diminish as a work of art. "Plaidoyers" present the idea that literary standards are established by the likes of "le Cuisinier, le Patissier et le Jardinier"; "Le Rappe du Parnasse" presents authors who prefer to rework classical literature in a modern style; "La Souricière des envieux, ou la confutation des critiques ou censeurs de livres, ouvrage fait pour la consolation des princes poétiques detronez, où il est montré que ceux-là sont maudits de Dieu, qui découvrent la turpitude de leurs parens et de leurs frères" posits as fleeting the glory enjoyed by contemporary authors, since the process of art imitating life is dangerous and the professional writer himself is reprehensible; "Imitation des Thresnes et Jeremie ou lamentation poétique de l'auteur sur la perte qu'il fit, en déménageant, de quatorze mille sonnets, sans les stances, épigrammes et autres pièces" refers to subjects of texts as

trivial; "La Vis sans fin, ou le projet et dessein d'un roman universel, divisé en autant de volumes que le libraire en voudra payer," "La Clef de sciences, ou la Croix de par Dieu du prince, c'est-à-dire l'art de bien apprendre à lire et à écrire, dédié à Monseigneur le Dauphin," "Placet rimé pour avoir privilege du Roy," and "Somme dédicatoire, ou examen général de toutes les questions qui se peuvent faire touchant la dédicace des livres, divisée en quatre volumes" all play upon the notion that the desire for the court's patronage is at the very center of artistic endeavors.

Thus it becomes evident that this "Inventaire" articulates many of the same failings as the author, in the preface, and the narrator, in the text, and as such can be viewed as an example of Chambers' concept of "figural embedding." For example the "Inventaire" is reminiscent of the preface to Book One in its focus on the importance of making works à la mode, as well as on the profit motive as impetus for publishing novels. To take another example, the "Inventaire," by its insistence that classical writers of Greece and Rome were superior to contemporary writers, echoes the narrator who labels those who have followed in the tradition of Virgil as worthless imitators.

In the inventory in particular and the Roman bourgeois in general, the notion prevails that art is born from a concern for monetary gain and a desire for glory. The last

entry in the "Inventaire" is: "Somme dédicatoire, ou examen général de toutes les questions qui se peuvent faire touchant la dédicace des livres, divisée en quatre volumes."(p.234) The "somme dédicatoire" essentially reduces literature to a profit-making venture. This entry underscores the importance for the author to be well versed in the style of writing book dedications. Since the profit motive functions as the primary motive in the composition of literary texts, the dedication functions as the cornerstone on which the entire book depends. Thus, art can be understood as following "bourgeois" concerns.

In the Roman bourgeois subversion is at play in both prefaces as well as throughout the narrative, as the narrator's voice fragments and disrupts the text: Subversion functions in the novel as a cohesive, not disruptive, force which motivates the text. This notion can be traced to the first preface where the libraire states: ". . .cet ouvrage n'aurait jamais vu le jour si l'infidélité de quelques-uns à qui il l'avait confié ne l'avait fait tomber entre mes mains."(p.25) The book then purports to owe its very publication to an act of subversion.

The legal system as well is systematically subverted by self-serving individuals with the desire to further their personal gain. For example Vollichon "avait coutume d'occuper pour deux ou trois parties en même procès, sous le

nom de différents procureurs de ses amis."(p.41) To gain Vollichon's favor, Nicodème "s'abandonnait avec lui pour plaider ses causes à vil prix. . . ." (p.42) Villeflatin becomes involved in Lucrèce's misfortune not for the sake of justice, but because a legal settlement would entitle him to a share of the money received. It is systematic subversion which holds the legal system together in the Roman bourgeois. In the novel, however, it is dominated by the bourgeoisie who profit from manipulating the system. This reverses the dynamics of the legal system, as it is a ploy in the hands of individuals who use it for illegal and immoral activity.

The instability of social structure in the Roman bourgeois also seems to be a result of the impossibility of the bourgeoisie and the aristocracy to come to grips with their social identity. The social codes appear fluid as the text plays upon the gap between the ideological "attitude" of a class and the behavior of individual members within the class. With the effective collapsing of the distance separating the aristocracy from the bourgeoisie, instead of the aristocracy acting as the model or object of bourgeois desires, the bourgeoisie could be understood as serving as an "antimodel" for the aristocracy, and as such would act as a warning for the aristocratic (implied) reader. The

author/libraire in the preface to Book One alerts the reader to this situation:

Ainsi, quand tu apercevrais dans ces personnages dépeints quelques caractères de quelqu'un de ta connaissance, ne fais point un jugement téméraire pour dire que ce soit lui; prends plutôt garde que, comme il y a ici les portraits de plusieurs sortes de sots, tu n'y rencontres le tien: car il n'y a presque personne qui ait le privilège d'en être exempt, et qui n'y puisse remarquer quelque trait de son visage, moralement parlant. (p.25)

The aristocracy is then implicated in every aspect of the bourgeois character: in its concern for social position and wealth; its love of subversion; its lack of honorable conduct; and its self-serving motivation.

The Roman bourgeois, as text, is presented by the author/libraire as possessing more power to change the human situation than "reality" itself: "C'est ainsi que celui qui contrefait le bossu devant un autre bossu lui fait bien mieux sentir son fardeau que la vue d'un autre homme qui aurait une pareille incommodité." (p.24) Chambers' observation echoes this same belief that stories are not innocent and that storytelling has the power to alter the human condition. The novel purports to function on one level as a moral would, as a corrective for social problems. But on another level, through its commentary and use of narrative "flaws" found in contemporary novels, the Roman bourgeois can be understood as purporting to correct

shortcomings in the literature of the time, as well. The text plays upon the unbridled potential for narrative creation. By critiquing the failings of contemporary literature, as well as by demonstrating the enormous potential in fiction, the Roman bourgeois beacons authors to follow the path of narrative innovation.

Chapter 6

The Role of Women in the Roman bourgeois

The Roman bourgeois, as we have seen, has been criticized for being a confusing or chaotic work. This criticism lies in the fact that this novel consistently subverts literary conventions, especially as to the plot. This lack of "coherence" deconstructs the narrator's identity with each ennonciation. Through subversive tactics we are left with a narrative voice which enjoys free-play in the fictional realm as it strips itself of any guise of human characteristics. Subversion is also at play in the identity of the bourgeoisie and its relation to the aristocracy in that the relationship of the bourgeoisie and aristocracy is used to blur social codes and to demonstrate the arbitrariness of the social system as well as that of literary codes. Subversion also reinforces the metafictional dynamic of the novel as it provides that all representations (narrator, bourgeois, aristocrat) are ultimately understood to be fictional constructs. The role of women in the novel, as we will see, provides another variation of metafictionality in the Roman bourgeois.

When one considers what is theoretically "plot" in conventional novels, love stories which purport to describe interpersonal relationships come to mind. The Roman

bourgeois borrows some elements from this traditional schema, as on the surface it describes love and "stories" controlled by conventional patriarchal relationships where women are subservient to male desires. However the primary female characters in this novel do not remain as subordinates "on the bottom." They achieve a reversal of roles through subversive tactics which render the patriarchy, by the end of the novel, totally ineffectual. The "love stories" of the Roman bourgeois are actually stories of subversion where the women write their own script. This script subverts the "text" of social codes. By writing their own scripts, the women's stories become stories of the story of subversion. As such their script is a mise en abyme of writing and is thus metafictional. Although it may be more subtle than the reflexive tactics of the narrator, the women's role as author is nonetheless self-referential since these women (like the narrator) appear conscious of what they are doing.

The relationship between men and women in the Roman bourgeois turns on the idea of conquest of both women by men as well as of men by women. For a woman, her power almost always lies in her capacity to seduce man: "Toute sa fortune était fondée sur les conquêtes de ses yeux et de ses charmes. . . ." (p.46) This reference to Lucretia illustrates that the fundamental role of women in the novel is to lead

to economic exchange, as illustrated by the dowry. The amount of money involved depends on the woman's physical attributes.

The first introduction to women in the novel is in the Eglise des Carmes where a ritual is taking place:

Une belle fille qui devait y quêter ce jour-là y avait encore attiré force monde, et tous les polis qui voulaient avoir quelque part en ses bonnes grâces y étaient accourus exprès pour lui donner quelque grosse pièce dans sa tasse: car c'était une pierre de touche pour connaître la beauté d'une fille ou l'amour d'un gomme que cette quête. Celui qui donnait la plus grosse pièce était estimé le plus amoureux, et la demoiselle qui avait la plus grosse somme était estimée la plus belle. (p.32)

Woman is presented as object, a passive entity which is in opposition to man and his active role as distributor of wealth.

The episode of the quêteuse is a parody and reversal of the courtois and heroic tradition:

De sorte que, comme autrefois, pour soutenir la beauté d'une maîtresse, la preuve cavalière était de se présenter la lance à la main en un tournoi contre tous venants, de même la preuve bourgeoise était en ces derniers temps de faire présenter sa maîtresse la tasse à la main en une quête, contre tous les galants. (pp.32-33)

There is a total transposition and reversal of roles. In the courtly tradition it is woman who sends the knight on

his quest, but here it is man who sends woman out to beg. The code of chivalry which glorifies and worships the ideal of "Woman" has been replaced in this novel by the law of the marketplace, where a woman's worth is no longer measured in the heroic deeds which a man is willing to perform to prove himself worthy of her, but is measured instead by the amount of money he is willing to contribute to the church on her behalf. Thus, woman is initially presented in the novel as a commodity whose worth is decided by men who control the wealth in society.

A woman's worth is determined by her physical appearance, a fact of which the quêteuse is aware:

Cette fille était pour lors dans son lustre, s'étant parée de tout son possible, et ayant été coiffée par une demoiselle suivante du voisinage, qui avait appris immédiatement de la Prime. Elle ne s'était pas contentée d'emprunter des diamants, elle avait un laquais d'emprunt qui lui portait la queue, afin de paraître davantage. (pp.33-34)

Once again, there seems to be the same emphasis on appearances that was manifested by both the bourgeoisie and the aristocracy and lamented by the narrator: "On n'examine point son mérite; on en juge seulement par l'extérieur. . . ." (p.55) The quêteuse masks herself with ornaments, such as borrowed jewelry and a borrowed valet, so as to appear more socially prominent: "Or, quoique cela ne fût pas de sa

condition, néanmoins elle fut bien aise de menager cette occasion de contenter sa vanité."(p.34)

The quêteuse turns out to be Javotte, whose beauty is enough to make her a desirable wife for any bourgeois man. Nicodème falls immediately in love with her:

'J'entends (ajouta Nicodème) qu'il n'y a personne à qui vous vous soyez arrêtée qui, ayant vu tant de beauté, n'ait fait voeu de vous aimer et de vous servir, et qui ne vous ait donné son coeur. En mon particulier, il m'a été impossible de vous refuser le mien.'(p.37)

Javotte's upbringing trained her for a future role as an obedient and hard-working wife. Not only her concern for appearances, but her lack of command of language, reflects her sheltered upbringing. Thus she is totally unreceptive to the flattering allegorical language of Nicodème, which she takes literally, thereby remaining at the level of the signifier:

--Je n'entends pas (dit Nicodème) parler ni d'or ni d'argent, mais je veux dire seulement qu'il n'y a personne qui, en vous donnant l'aumône, ne vous ait en même temps donné son coeur.

--Je ne sais (repartit Javotte) ce que vous voulez dire de coeurs; je n'en ai trouvé pas un seul dans ma tasse. (pp.36-37)

Just as Javotte seems to embody the bourgeois ideal of woman by her beauty, she appears to represent the bourgeois ideal of "daughter," through her total submission to

parental authority, as exemplified by her taking offense to Nicodème's advances: "Monsieur, prenez garde comme vous parlez: je suis honnête fille: je n'ai point d'amoureux; maman m'a bien défendu d'en avoir."(p.37) When Nicodème claims that the goal of his passion is "une recherche légitime," Javotte immediately considers that as a marriage proposal: "--C'est donc, Monsieur (repliqua Javotte), que vous me voulez épouser? Il faut pour cela vous adresser à mon papa et à maman: car aussi bien je ne sais pas ce qu'ils me veulent donner en mariage."(p.37) Here Javotte reacts as a young bourgeois woman as she immediately seeks to legitimize her encounter with Nicodème by speaking of marriage. The narrator speaks of this "fault" in the bourgeois character:

. . .car c'est le défaut ordinaire des filles de cette condition, qui veulent qu'un homme soit amoureux d'elles sitôt qu'il dit une petite douceur, et qui, sitôt qu'il en est amoureux, il aille chez des notaires ou devant un curé, pour rendre les témoignages de sa passion plus assurés. (pp.37-38)

This "flaw" in the bourgeois character is opposed to the aristocracy and their education in the art de plaire:

C'est aussi la cause de cette grande différence qui est entre les gens de la Cour et la bourgeoisie: car la noblesse, faisant une profession ouverte de galanterie, et s'accoutumant à voir les dames dès la plus tendre jeunesse, se

forme certaine habitude de civilité et de politesse qui dure toute la vie. Au lieu que les gens du commun ne peuvent jamais attraper ce bel air, parce qu'ils n'étudient point cet art de plaire qui ne s'apprend qu'auprès des dames, et qu'après être touché de quelque belle passion. Ils ne font jamais l'amour qu'en passant et dans une posture forcée, n'ayant autre but que de se mettre vite en ménage. (p.38)

The aristocracy indulges in games mirrored in the art of seduction which reflect their concern for acting according to the codes governing the art of seduction and the social graces. Love, then, is not a sexual act but a pretext for rituals, both linguistic and social. The bourgeoisie differs from the aristocracy in that the bourgeoisie is presented as a class too coarse to appreciate the art of loving. Their presumed lack of social grace is perhaps most evident in the scene where Nicodème, believing that all is in order, comes to court Javotte:

Il ne fut pas assez hardi pour saluer, en sortant, sa maîtresse de la manière qu'il est permis aux amants déclarés. Pour Javotte, elle se contenta de lui faire une révérence muette; mais en se levant elle laissa tomber un peloton de fil et ses ciseaux, qui étaient sur la jupe. Nicodème se jette aussitôt avec précipitation à ses pieds pour les relever; Javotte se baisse, de son côté, pour le prévenir; et, se relevant tous deux en même temps, leurs deux fronts se heurterent avec telle violence, qu'ils se firent chacun une bosse. (p. 78)

The narrator, by presenting this love scene in such a farcical manner, devalorizes it as the union of the couple

appears forced and unnatural, and one which actually brings about physical harm.

Within bourgeois society the binding force between a man and a woman is not love, but the legal contract. One reason for this submission to the authority of the legal system on the part of young men and women is that as children they are expected to submit to parental authority, since it is the parents who have total control over the children's education. This is evident in the case of Javotte, whose parents show their complete control over her life. Mme Vollichon proudly states:

. . .c'est une fille fort jeune, et si innocente qu'elle en est toute sotte. . . . Ma fille a toujours été bien élevée, et je la livrerai à un mari bonne ménagère; depuis le matin jusqu'au soir elle ne lève pas les yeux de dessus sa besogne."(pp.90-91)

However, even at this point in the novel where Javotte seems locked in a subordinate situation, she knows that she is being kept in a state of ignorance as she tells Bedout "Je ne sais pas (Monsieur) si on vous a parlé de moi; mais je sais bien qu'on ne m'a point parlé de vous."(p.90) This reflects another trait of female characters in the text, an aspect which becomes more important as the text unfolds; that women are aware that they are playing by society's rules.

As a bourgeois daughter her role is essentially to be silent in the face of parental and legal authority. This becomes especially evident in situations where she is the central figure. For example, when Nicodème comes to pay her a visit: ". . .elle se retirait dans une autre chambre en le voyant venir, où, si elle y demeurerait, elle ne lui disait pas un mot, tant elle avait de retenue en présence de sa mère, qui était toujours auprès d'elle."(pp.42-43) In the same manner when Bedout speaks of marriage, Javotte remains silent: "--Comment (reprit-il), est-ce qu'on prétend vous marier sans vous en rien dire? --Je ne sais (dit-elle). --Mais que diriez-vous (repartit-il) si on vous proposait un mariage? Je ne dirais rien (répondit Javotte)!"(p.90) Within the bourgeois social code, silence represents agreement: ". . .nos lois portent en termes formels que qui ne dit mot semble consentir."(p.90) Javotte's conduct and concern for propriety and parental approval appear, then, early in the novel to completely coincide with her assigned role as a submissive and obedient daughter.

Just as the spoken word eludes Javotte, so does the written word. For example, when Jean Bedout writes her a lettre galante she immediately gives it to her father to read, not imagining that it could be addressed to her since she has never before received a letter. Even after Vollichon reads the letter, he does not tell her that it was meant for

her. Moreover the narrator states that Vollichon is pleased by her naïveté.

In the same way that Javotte is deprived of the written word on a personal level, so is she deprived of the written word on the legal level. Although Javotte is central to the marriage contract she has no input since it serves as a transaction between Nicodème and later Jean Bedout who aim to satisfy Vollichon, not his daughter. The marriage contract is not drawn up according to any desire on the part of Javotte, but instead according to Vollichon's desire to get the wealthiest man possible for a son-in-law. Marriage then operates as a business transaction with the woman serving as an object of exchange as if she were a commodity of the marketplace. This analogy culminates in the novel with the Tarif ou évaluation des partis sortables pour faire facilement les mariages which shows how women and men are matched in marriage according to their wealth.⁶⁸ For example:

Pour une fille qui a deux
livres en mariage
ou environ, jusqu'à
six mille livres.

Il lui faut un
marchand du Palais
ou un petit commis,
sergent, ou sollici-
teur de proces. (p.42)

This system where marriage is exclusively a business arrangement between the father and prospective son-in-law

results in the ultimate transfer of parental authority from the hands of the father to those of the husband, who will in turn control his family's wealth. This wealth, of course, includes the wife herself, since her primary function is as a commodity. Jean Bedout expresses this idea by saying that a perfect wife is one who is completely submissive to her husband: "Quant à moi, je trouve qu'il n'y a rien de tel que de prendre pour femme une fille fort jeune, car on la forme comme l'on veut avant qu'elle ait pris son pli."(p.90) Thus within the bourgeois system, both legally and socially, a woman's role is to be submissive to authority, controlled by man who possesses the power of the word, both written and spoken.

The tarif underscores the fact that in the novel the relationship between men and women is based on and governed by social codes. The same can be said for all relationships in the novel. However, these codes function effectively, not because they are adhered to by all, but instead because they are systematically subverted. This is exemplified by Javotte whose ultimate escape from the novel goes beyond manipulation of the system. She liberates herself through making use of the system itself whose very purpose is to impose restrictions on women. Because of the passive role delegated by society, women must subvert the system if they are to exercise any power or realize their own desires.

Their weapon is the very thing which makes them the object of men's desire; that is to say, their beauty. The narrator points out that women are adept at manipulation by means of their beauty, as he states ". . .en effect les femmes sont fort trompeuses."(p.51) Beauty in Book One appears as the only means by which a woman can overcome the limitations of the Tarif des mariages and be free to marry above her lot in society. Vollichon, sensing danger in this regard, is aware of his own daughter's beauty, yet chooses not to use it as a bargaining chip, viewing it ultimately as a threat to his own authority:

Il ne comptait même pour rien la rare beauté de Javotte, et il ne s'attendait pas qu'elle lui fît faire fortune. Peut-être même qu'en ceci il ne manquait pas de raison; car il arrive la plupart du temps que ceux qui comptent là-dessus se trouvent attrapés, et que ces fortunes que les bourgeoises font pour leur beauté aboutissent bien souvent à une question de rapt que font les parents du jeune homme qui les épouse, ou à une séparation de biens que demande la nouvelle mariée a un fanfaron ruiné. (p.43)

Vollichon's fear is well founded as Javotte's beauty allows her entry in the Academie bourgeoise: "car une belle personne est toujours un grand ornement dans une compagnie de femmes."(p.102) This in turn leads to her fleeing her bourgeois life. For Vollichon a women's beauty serves as nothing more than a means of seduction, therefore all women harbor the potential to seduce men. Thus, there is always

the possibility for a husband to be a cuckold, even by a seemingly faithful wife. Vollichon voices his fears regarding the fidelity of his own wife saying: ". . . ces bonnes ménagères sont fort à craindre, qui font que leurs maris ont leur provision de bois sans aller la chercher sur le port."(pp.99-100)

In contrast to Javotte, Lucrèce seems aware of the powers of her beauty from the outset. Though not as beautiful as Javotte, she has the confidence to make up in charm what she may lack in beauty: ". . .(elle) était une fille grande et bien faite, qui avait de l'esprit et du courage, mais de la vanité plus que tout le reste."(p.45) From the beginning she is unlike Javotte in that she has no parents, being cared for by her aunt and uncle. She therefore has fewer restrictions at home and consequently has developed a stronger sense of her power as a woman. She scorns her bourgeois condition and actively attempts to rise above it through marriage. Ironically her strategy of using marriage as a means of economic gain is itself bourgeois:

Elle (Lucrèce) portait cependant un état de fille de condition, quoique, comme j'ai dit, elle eût peu de bien ou plutôt point du tout. Elle passait pour un parti qui avait, disait-on, quinze mille écus; mais ils étaient assignés sur les brouillards de la rivière de Loire, qui sont des effets à la vérité fort liquides, mais qui ne sont pas bien clairs. Sur cette fausse supposition, Lucrèce ne laissait pas de bâtir de grandes espérances, et, quand on lui proposait pour mari

un avocat, elle disait en secouant la tête: 'Fi, je n'aime point cette bourgeoisie!' elle prétendait au moins d'avoir un auditeur des comptes ou un trésorier de France: car elle avait trouvé que cela était dû à ses prétendus quinze mille écus dans le tarif des partis sortables. (pp.46-47)

She effectuates her means of escape by becoming involved with the Marquis, who is physically attracted to her from the first: "D'abord qu'il la vit il en fut charmé. . ." (p.51) Having found a sufficiently rich suitor, the scene is set for Lucrèce to carry out her plan: ". . .elle ne voulait point engager son coeur qu'en établissant sa fortune." (p.66)

This brings us to another form of subversion, for just as a woman can profit from her own beauty she can also profit from the marriage contract. Lucrèce takes control of writing her own "text" as she arranges to have two separate marriage contracts drawn up, one by the Marquis and another by Nicodème. The marriage contracts become interdependent, since Nicodème's contract, which was thought to be non-binding and indeed a joke, becomes binding after the Marquis breaches what was thought to be a binding contract. Although the Marquis breaches his contract with Lucrèce, Nicodème does not. Thus Lucrèce profits from Nicodème's handsome settlement.

Both Lucrèce and Javotte take advantage of the freedom that accompanies having secured a marriage contract. It

follows that before the marriage contract a daughter represents a liability for her father, who is responsible for maintaining her "virtue". It is therefore necessary to keep the daughter under close watch. We have already seen this in the case of Javotte and Vollichon. After the marriage contract with Nicodème is signed, Vollichon's responsibility appears lessened, and he is therefore relieved:

Villeflatin s'en réjouit d'abord avec lui, disant qu'il faisait fort bien de la marier ainsi jeune; qu'une fille est de grande garde; qu'un père en est déchargé et n'est plus responsable de ses fredaines quand elle est entre les mains d'un mari, qui est obligé d'en avoir le soin. (p.72)

The freedom allowed Javotte after having secured the marriage contract made possible her ultimate escape from the confines of bourgeois society:

Comme on ne douta plus alors que Javotte ne fût bientôt mariée, à cause qu'on avait en main ces deux partis, on commença à lui donner chez elle plus de liberté qu'elle n'avait auparavant. On lui fit venir un maître à danser pour la façonner, et on choisit entre tous ceux de la ville celui qui montrait à meilleur marché; encore sa mère voulut qu'il lui montrât principalement les cinq pas et les trois visages, danses qui avaient été dansées à sa noce, et qu'elle disait être les plus belles de toutes. On lui permit aussi de voir le beau monde, de faire des visites dans les beaux réduits, et de se mêler en des compagnies d'illustres et de précieuses. . . (p.102)

Thus Javotte is free to attend this salon known as the Académie bourgeoise, which in turn causes her parents to lose control while her "éducation" in the Académie bourgeoise grows. Thus the education, product of the marriage contract, leads to the dissolution of the contract itself as Javotte becomes aware of the existence of a world apart from her parents and is able to transcend the limits imposed on her by her parents. She quite literally escapes from the confines of bourgeois society when she is kidnapped by Pancrace. She reaches a point of total independence from her bourgeois past as she completely disappears from the novel.

Historically, when parental authority fails, recourse is to be found in sending a girl to a convent so that she will be kept at a "safe" distance from men. However, in the Roman bourgeois the purpose of convents is completely undermined, and money is the cause:

. . . quoique ces bonnes soeurs vécussent entre elles avec toute la vertu imaginable, elles avaient ce malheur de ne pouvoir subsister que par les grosses pensions qu'on leur donnait pour entrer chez elles. C'est ce qui leur faisait recevoir indifféremment toutes sortes de pensionnaires. Toutes les femmes qui voulaient plaider contre leurs maris ou cacher le désordre de leur vie ou leurs escapades y étaient reçues, de même que toutes les filles qui voulaient éviter les poursuites d'un galant, ou en attendre et en attraper quelqu'un. (pp.154-155)

In fact, the system harbored subversion as women within the convent were free to interact with one another, thus sharing knowledge:

Celles-là, qui étaient expérimentées, et qui savaient toutes les ruses et les adresses de la galanterie, enseignaient les jeunes innocentes que leur malheur y avait fait entrer, qui y faisaient un noviciat de coquetterie, en même temps qu'on croyait leur en faire faire un de religion.
(p.155)

This situation reflects a type of crass commercialism which has the church selling services which in effect help to subvert and destabilize the system itself. Once again money is the motivating factor and women are the commodity being traded.

Needless to say, Javotte, herself, takes advantage of the subversive actions which the convent allows: "Mais, hélas! que ce fut un mauvais expédient pour sa correction! Elle tomba, comme on dit, de fièvre en chaud mal. . ." (p.154) She is able to spend time alone with her lover Pancrace, something which would not have been possible with her parents:

Jamais il (Pancrace) ne trouva de lieu qui fût plus selon ses souhaits pour prêcher son amour tout à loisir: car il avait eu cet avantage de parler à sa maîtresse seul à seul, et tant qu'il voulait; au lieu que pendant que Javotte était dans le monde, il ne la voyait que hors de chez elle, et rarement dans des compagnies où elle lui

donnait rendez-vous, et où ils étaient perpétuellement interrompus par les changements qui arrivent d'ordinaire. (p.155)

The convent ultimately allows for Javotte's final escape from bourgeois society, as she is kidnapped by Pancrace and vanishes from the novel.

Lucrèce also profits from her stay in convents. Her pregnancy is not discovered due to her changing convents at the appropriate time. Since her move is to a stricter convent, she appears all the more pious and God-fearing:

Quelquefois elle ajoutait fort dévotement qu'elle y avait trouvé un peu trop de licence (au premier couvent); qu'elle n'approuvait point que les parloirs fussent si remplis de toutes sortes de gens; et elle confessait même que souvent elle s'était fait celer tout exprès, de peur d'y aller et d'y voir tout ce désordre. (p. 161)

The narrator tells us that Lucrèce is a hypocrite, however her hypocrisy is so hidden from the other characters that she is totally convincing in her role as exemplary Christian:

D'abord elle feignit de vouloir passer à un ordre plus mitigé; enfin, elle se fit tellement remontrer qu'on pouvait faire aussi bien son salut dans le monde, en vivant bien avec son mari et en élevant des enfants dans la crainte de Dieu, qu'on la fit résoudre au mariage, avec la même peine qu'un criminel se résoudrait à la mort. (p.163)

From first being a victim of the Marquis' ruse, she succeeds in profiting greatly from manipulating the very institutions which would have ruined her. By undermining bourgeois and religious standards she ultimately gains prestige and piety in the eyes of society, as ultimately religious life serves as a vehicle for her finding a husband. She, *Lucrèce*, is not tied to her past condition and is totally virtuous in the eyes of society.

Ironically, at the end of Book One, Javotte echoes the early *Lucrèce*'s attitude, as she wants the freedom to love whomever she pleases:

(Javotte) remerciait ses parents de la peine qu'ils avaient prise de lui chercher un époux, mais qu'ils devaient en laisser le soin à ses yeux; qu'ils étaient assez beaux pour lui en attirer à choisir; qu'elle avait assez de mérite pour épouser un homme de qualité qui aurait des plumes, et qui n'aurait point cet air bourgeois qu'elle haïssait à mort. . . (p.149)

Thus, Javotte has clearly evolved from a sheltered and naive girl to a responsible adult, a phenomenon reflected by her command of language. Linguistically, she has attained a level of abstraction and nuance, as well as the ability to argue, which were totally lacking at the beginning of the novel, when she was looking for *Nicodème*'s heart at the bottom of her cup.

Collantine, in Book Two, adds another dimension to the role of women in the novel. She seems almost androgenous, as she is naturally strong willed and able to beat men at their own games. She is very different from both Javotte and Lucrèce in her physical appearance and attitude towards others:

Cette fille était sèche et maigre du souci de sa mauvaise fortune, et pour seconde cause de son chagrin elle avait la bonne fortune des autres; car tout son plaisir n'était qu'à troubler le repos d'autrui, et elle avait moins de joie du bien qui lui arrivait que du mal qu'elle faisait.
(pp.172-173)

She does however demonstrate vanity, which the narrator claims is a trademark of her sex. Her physical, moral, and psychological make-up lead directly to one profession: ". . . toutes qualités nécessaires à perfectionner une personne qui veut faire le métier de plaider." (p.173) Unlike Javotte and Lucrèce, she is not deprived of an education, and this, along with her natural inclinations, leads her to become a plaideur.

Whereas Javotte and Lucrèce manifest their power of subversion covertly, Collantine makes a career out of it. She takes on clients to make money, just as Vollichon does, with no consideration for ethics or justice:

--Comment (reprit-il)! plaidez-vous contre une communauté, ou contre plusieurs personnes intéressées en une même affaire?

--Nenni dea (répliqua Collantine); c'est que j'ai toutes sortes de procès, et contre toutes sortes de personnes. Il est vrai que celui pour qui je viens maintenant ici contient une belle question de droit, et qui mérite bien d'être écoutée. Je n'ai acheté ce procès que cent écus, et si j'en ai déjà retiré près de mille francs. (p.174)

This is due in large measure to her refusal to be silenced by men. In fact, it is Collantine who insists on having the last word, which angers and frustrates her future husband, Charroselles:

Un jour entre autres, qu'il avait fait plusieurs tentatives inutiles, il se mit tellement en colère contre elle, qu'il était presque résolu de la lier et de lui mettre un baillon dans la bouche, pour avoir sa revanche et la prêcher tout à loisir. . . (pp. 185-186)

Just as Collantine insists on having the last spoken word, she shows herself a master of the written word which she enjoys flaunting:

Lors de sa première visite, et immédiatement après le premier compliment, Charroselles la voulut régaler de son bel esprit, et lui montrer le catalogue de ses ouvrages. Mais Collantine l'interrompit, et lui fit voir auparavant toutes les étiquettes de ses procès.(p.182)

At every step Collantine shows herself Charroselles' equal:

Quand il (Charroselles) vit qu'il était impossible qu'il fût écouté, il tira un livret imprimé de sa poche, contenant une petite nouvelle, qu'il lui donna, à la charge qu'elle la lirait le soir. Elle ne parut point ingrate, et aussitôt elle lui donna un gros factum à pareille condition.(p.182)

She actively creates her own narrative, and refuses to be confined to the silent role reserved for women in society.

Collantine is also unique in that she does not try to seduce men through her physical attributes (of which she has few), but through her rhetoric and talent in pleading cases, in which she finds her sole form of pleasure: "--Ha! donnez-vous-en bien de garde, Monsieur le prévot (répliqua busquement Collantine), car le seul moyen de me plaire est de se défendre contre moi jusqu'à l'extrémité."(p.206) Thus, she will only marry a man who is her equal in pleading cases. Charroselles, by winning a case against her, is a likely candidate: "Surtout Collantine, qui se croyait invincible en ce genre de combat, admirait le héros qui lui avait tenu tête, et commença de le trouver digne d'elle."(p.191)

Collantine's eventual marriage to Charroselles is devastating for her other suitor, Belastre. In a complete reversal of bourgeois standards, Belastre looks to Collantine for financial security. Marrying her would be his last chance of maintaining his social position. This example of the power enjoyed by Collantine, as well as the other

examples already mentioned, underscore the tension in the social structure which places women in a subordinate position. The system is essentially being destabilized by itself. Thus, social relationships reflect this ongoing dialectical tension between those who possess power and those who are looking to get it. The novel ends on this same note: ". . . ils (Collantine et Charroselles) ont toujours plaidé et plaident encore, et plaideront tant qu'il plaira à Dieu de les laisser vivre." (p.255) Javotte and Lucrèce, as well, take part in a perpetual combat as they manipulate and subvert the system in order to free themselves from the very social institutions (legal, familial, theological) which are the agents of their initial oppression. These three characters reject the traditional role of silence and submission which society offers them. They reject the notion that their roles are "written for them." Instead they take an active role and rewrite their own narrative and create their own identity. In creating their roles they manipulate texts: Lucrèce does this by having two marriage contracts drawn up; Javotte does this by using L'Astrée as a "literal" means of escaping her situation; and Collantine does this by using legal texts as a means through which pass all social interaction.

These characters need to be subversive, since it is the only way to exercise their authorial role as women. Women

need subversion to establish their own identity as women, to transcend their situation, and to create their own roles. Thus, it follows that simpleminded Javotte is transformed into an intellectual, that the "fallen" Lucreèce becomes virginal, and that androgenous Collantine becomes seductress and finally wife. Their maneuverings become the plots of the text, plots which recount the story of subversion, and as such draw attention to the fiction-making process. Because the female characters are capable of writing fiction, they escape being bound by the patriarchy. The means of their liberation is manipulation and their "stories" of freedom mirror the narrator's who demonstrates boundless creativity in making fiction "reality" and reality "fiction".

Conclusion

The cycle of comic novels is born as a reaction against the invraisemblance of pastoral and heroic novels. The comic novels, sometimes referred to as anti-novels, satirize and parody traditional works. The Roman bourgeois differs from other novels of this period since it goes one step further and parodies other anti-novels as well.

The Roman bourgeois problematizes representation of both empirical reality as well as intertextual representation in fiction. This novel explores its own identity as it exposes and comments on the fiction-making process. The function of the Roman bourgeois, then, can be understood as metafictional since it draws the reader's attention to the fact that the world represented is in the end purely fictional, as it operates independently of and at times in opposition to what would commonly be construed as empirical reality.

From the preface the text calls attention to its own fictional nature. This problematizes beginnings: the preface is a rewritten version of the original written by the author. A consequence of this situation is that it calls into question all authorial credibility in the text: the reader does not know where the author's voice ends and where the libraire's (who after all is himself only a reader)

begins. The preface exposes the process of textual representation as well as the process of textual creation, both primary objectives of the reflexive novel.

In the novel itself it is the narrator who is at the very center of it all. He emerges as the novel's main character, one who is capable of limitless creation. His function is metafictional in that he is a framing device for the novel and a mediator between reader and text. His role, however, extends much further: his is the sole authorial voice of the text which makes him both the voice of representation as well as auto-representation, two functions which he problematizes. Not only does he implicitly expose the shortcomings of textual creation, but he comments upon them at length. This creates a mise en abyme of narration and can be conceptualized as a mimesis of process. Language is presented as an imperfect means of representation which results in the total separation of the fictional realm from the three-dimensional. Thus the narrator is capable of unrestrained creative freedom, which he exercises through subversive tactics. The narrator even destabilizes his own identity by taking on contradictory roles. In the true vein of parody everything must be questioned, altered, or destroyed. This occurs to such an extent that in the Roman bourgeois there is the uncertainty of the existence of a

well-structured reality since the only constant is the authority of the narrator.

This authority is evident in the relationship between the narrator and the narratee, device of the narrator. Even in those instances when the narrator pretends to relinquish authority to the narratee, in effect the narrator is manipulating the situation in order to reinforce his own authority. He never shares his privileged position. Just as in the preface, the narrator begins by associating himself with the reader/narratee, only to later turn on him and break the supposed bonds which united them. The narrator actually viciously insults the narratee and questions his competency as reader. This enables the narrator to counter any negative reaction that the narratee (or actual reader) may have to the Roman bourgeois since he claims that the narratee is incapable of critical analysis. This subversion of the bonds of trust functions ironically as a bonding force in the narrative since it unites the various stances and pronouncements made by the narrator.

As metafiction, the novel presents both a picture of bourgeois life as well as the subversion of the picture painted. The parody of literary conventions (of "form") coupled with the problematizing of representation undermines the authority of this text (or any text) to paint a picture of "objective" reality. Thus the bourgeoisie emerges as an

illusion in the form of a linguistic construct. This particular construct is presented as operating according to social codes which seem purely arbitrary. These codes act as figures embedded in the novel, and thus serve as a metaphor for the general arbitrariness of any system in fiction. It is the narrator, through his authorial freedom, who creates the bourgeoisie and the aristocracy of the novel. His own subversive tactics are mirrored in the subversion of the characters: there are no noble heroes, bourgeois or aristocratic. Characters freely manipulate and subvert the social system for their own gain; actions which are representative of those employed by the narrator to reinforce his own authority. In the end there is a collapsing of the bourgeoisie and the aristocracy, thus demonstrating that there is no hierarchy in either the realm of social or of textual constructs.

With the role of female characters in this novel, metafiction can be seen to operate on another level. Women are not only presented as fictional constructs, like the bourgeoisie or the aristocracy, they also function as authors of their own life stories. They escape the confines of the patriarchal system in which they are born by subverting the system itself. Their stories, then, are the stories of the story of subversion, and as such can function as a mise en abyme of textual creation, of novel writing.

The patriarchal system is presented as an arbitrary arrangement where, reminiscent of the relationship between bourgeoisie and aristocracy, men do not appear as inherently superior to women. This situation is recognized by many male characters. Since the male characters are incapable of dominating female characters, the latter find themselves both in and out of the system. When they are "in" they manipulate the system, aware that they are playing roles assigned by society. When they are "out" they subvert the system and write their own script which allows them to create their own roles and transform their very identities.

Through these various analyses it should be evident that the Roman bourgeois deserves to be considered as metafiction. Textual self-referentiality doubles back on itself at every turn exposing, exploring, reflecting, and commenting upon the fiction-making process. Through its subversive twists and lack of a coherent plot structure the mechanics of creating fiction is laid bare, not masked by the illusion that it represents anything other than fiction itself.

Notes

1 Antoine Adam, Histoire de la littérature française au XVIIème siècle, Vol. 4 (Paris: Domat, 1954), p. 210.

2 Jean Serroy, Roman et réalité: Les Histoires comiques au XVIIème siècle, p.608.

3 English Showalter, Jr. The Evolution of the French Novel, 1641-1782 (Princeton: Princeton Press, 1972). See chapter 3, "Techniques of Realism in Early French Fiction."

4 René Bray, La Formation de la doctrine classique en France (Lausanne: Payot, 1931), p. 192.

5 Bray, p. 192.

6 Boileau, Oeuvres (Paris; Firmin Didot Frères, 1864), p.202.

7 There have been many names given to this cycle of novels. Adam alone refers to them at various times as: Realistic; comic; anti-novels; and burlesque.

8 Adam, Tome I, Chapter on the Novel.

9 Adam, Tome II, p. 144.

10 Adam, Tome II, p. 150. Boileau complains of this characteristic when he states: "Gardez donc de donner, ainsi que dans Clélie/ L'air ni l'esprit français à l'antique Italie." (p. 204)

11 Serroy refers to this as a "natural" setting.(p. 604)

12 Adam, Tome IV, p. 211.

13 Adam argues that Furetière ridiculed Sorel throughout his life; this serves as a possible explanation for the frustrated novelist Charroselles.

14 Michèle Vialet, "Le Roman bourgeois: L'Ecriture de l'incohérence," North American Society for Seventeenth-Century French Literature Actes de Banff 1986, pp. 373-74.

15 Adam, Tome IV, p. 210.

16 Based on Barthe's use of the term. Jean Alter argues that this novel is ". . .non-lisible et non-scriptible, donc essentiellement illisible." In "Vers des re-lectures du Roman bourgeois: du lisible, du scriptible, de l'illisible et du relisible," Actes de Banff 1986 North American Society for Seventeenth-Century French Literature, p.248. Harriet Stone in "Breach of Contract: Flight from Imitation" Actes de Banff 1986 North American Society for Seventeenth-Century French Literature states, "Le Roman bourgeois must be considered more than a readerly (lisible) text. . ."(p.396).

17 Antoine Furetière, Le Roman bourgeois (Paris: Gallimard, 1981), p. 24. All subsequent citations will be indicated by page number.

18 Micheal Boyd, The Reflexive Novel: Fiction as Critique (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1983), p. 7.

19 Linda Hutcheon, Narcissistic Narrative: The Metafictional Paradox (Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1980), p. 18.

20 Hutcheon, p. 42.

21 There is, for example, the introduction by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, in Of Grammatology (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976).

22 Since it is widely accepted that the novel came into its own in the nineteenth century, general observations on the function and role of the preface are valuable. Let us take examples of prefaces of four major nineteenth-century authors: Balzac's La Comédie humaine, Zola's Thérèse Raquin, Hugo's Notre Dame de Paris, and Chateaubriand's Atala. Three general tendencies can be identified. First, the origin or source which inspired the writing of the novel is explained (Balzac, Hugo, Chateaubriand). Second, the author comments on the novel's composition (Balzac, Hugo). Third, the relationship between the novel and contemporary problems is explored, exemplified by Balzac's incorporating the quarrel between Cuvier and Geoffroi Saint-Hilaire, as well as Zola's response to his critics in the preface to the second edition of Thérèse Raquin.

23 Jacques Derrida, "Hors livre," in La Dissémination (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1972), p. 9.

24 Spivak, Of Grammatology, p. xvii.

25 Some examples are Manon Lescaut and Les Liasons dangereuses.

26 Bray, p.191.

27 Selma Zebouni, "Classicisme et vraisemblance," Papers on French Seventeenth-Century Literature, No. VIII (Winter 1977-78), pp. 63-78.

28 Ross Chambers, Story and Situation (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), p. 7.

29 Edith Kern, The Absolute Comic (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), pp. 1-37.

30 Gerard Genette, Palimpsestes: La Littérature au second degré (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1982), pp. 7-14.

31 Linda Hutcheon, A Theory of Parody: The Teachings of Twentieth-Century Art Forms (New York: Methuen, 1985), p. 44.

32 Hutcheon, Parody, p. 32.

33 While conscience of Benveniste's notion of the relative dependency of the tu to je, I wish to emphasize that there is a distancing at work since the reader, at first referred to as nous, is later referred to as vous when there is an element of parody.

34 Boyd, p. 7.

35 Hutcheon, Narcissistic, p. 18.

36 See Foucault's chapter on representation in Les Mots et les choses (Paris: Gallimard, 1966), pp. 60-91.

37 Paul Scarron, Le Roman comique (Paris: Flammarion, 1981) p.67.

38 Boyd, p.23.

39 Boyd, p.9.

40 See Lucien Dällenbach's definition of mise en abyme in Le Récit spéculaire (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1977), pp. 15-16.

41 See Riffaterre's chapter on literary clichés in his Essais de stylistique structurale (Paris: Flammarion, 1971), pp. 161-181.

- 42 Hutcheon, Narcissistic, pp. 38-39.
- 43 Hutcheon, Narcissistic, p.39.
- 44 Hutcheon, Narcissistic, p.42.
- 45 Gerald Prince, "Introduction à l'étude du narrataire," Poétique, No. 14 (1973), pp.180-181.
- 46 Chambers, p. 218.
- 47 Gérard Genette, Nouveau Discours du récit (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1983) p.91.
- 48 Genette, Nouveau Discours, p. 102.
- 49 W. Daniel Wilson, "Readers in Texts," PMLA, Vol. 96, No. 5 (Oct. 1981), p.856.
- 50 "Readers in Texts," p.856.
- 51 Hutcheon, Narcissistic, p. 7.
- 52 See Genette's distinction in "Vraisemblance et motivation" Communications 11 (1968), p. 5.
- 53 Vialet, p.378.
- 54 Hutcheon, Narcissistic, p.7.
- 55 Jean Alter, p.248.
- 56 Saussure's Course of General Linguistics (New York: Philosophical Library, 1959), pp. 67-68.
- 57 Chambers, p. 25.
- 58 Chambers, p. 3.
- 59 Chambers, p. 10.
- 60 Chambers, pp. 25-26.
- 61 Chambers, p. 33.
- 62 This is a typical strategy of the comic novel and was discussed in Chapter 1 of this study.
- 63 Roland Barthes, "L'Effet du réel," in Litterature et realite (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1982), p. 83

64 Francion, p. 218

65 Catherine Belsey, Critical Practice (London: Methuen) p. 57.

66 Harriet Stone, p. 389.

67 Döring states that it contradicts the narrative in his article "De l'autorité à l'autonomie: Le Roman bourgeois, Actes de Banff, North American Society for Seventeenth-Century French Literature, 1986, pp. 401-424.

68 See Madeleine Alcover, "Furetière et la stratification sociale: le 'tariffe des mariages'" Papers on French Seventeenth-Century Literature Vol. VIII, No. 15 (Spring, 1979), pp. 75-93.

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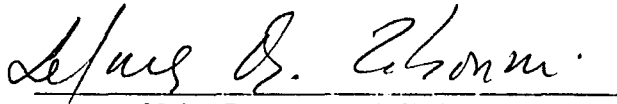
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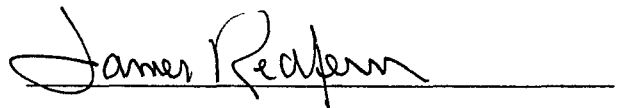


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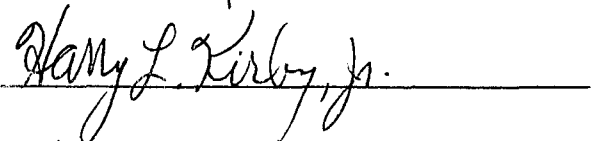
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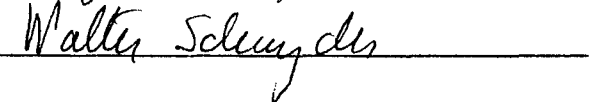
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